Peter David . . 14
One of America's leading comics authors ridicules the publishing stereotypes of the Nineties.

Comics Economics . 22
A special report announcing the one hundred top selling American comic books of 1993.

Arthur Ranson . . 30
One of Britain's leading comics artists speaks out on the state of the UK industry.

Lou Bank . . 52
Comics marketing VP lashes out at **Cerebus** creator Dave Sim ... "a rebel without a clue".

Comics INTERNATIONAL

Issue 39 February 1994 | The Comics Industry Monthly | 80 pages 50p / $1.25

Following the summer glut and the winter slump...

Four publishers quit as market plummets

MANY publishers continue to suffer huge losses through low trade orders as a result of last summer's surfeit of new titles, and four companies are soon to cancel all their publications.

Following a year of turmoil, with many cancellations and setbacks, Marvel UK has announced that it is handing over its most popular titles to Marvel US, including Alan Davis's **The ClanDestine, Death's Head II**, and other projects still under consideration. Tom DeFalco, editor-in-chief of Marvel US, will assume responsibility for the rescheduled titles, while Paul Neary will remain as UK editor of his long-time associate Alan Davis's new mini-series.

Departing Marvel UK Director of Circulation and Development Lou Bank – who leaves Britain to become the Vice President of Marketing and Sales for Dark Horse in Milwaukie, Oregon – blamed the great distance from America for Marvel UK's problems in achieving high sales figures. He added that a lack of communication with the US marketplace had also contributed to the decision.

"Back to basics"

However, Marvel UK considers Britain to be a healthier market for its product, with its population a quarter of the US, but crowded into an area less than a fortieth of its size. The company now intends to concentrate on more newsstand titles, complementing its existing line. Although a development period of six months is being anticipated for new launches, Bank concluded by saying, "It is believed, in the UK, comics only work if they're licensed from television. Marvel UK expects to reverse the trend".

The 1989-established publisher Innovation is to cease trading. Best-known for such TV-licensed titles as **Quantum Leap, Lost in Space, Beauty and the Beast** and **Dark Shadows**, Innovation also produced a line of adaptations from novels by Anne Rice, Terry Pratchett, Piers Anthony and Don Pendleton, as well as originating material featuring **The Hero Alliance, The Maze Agency** and **The Justice Machine**. Outside of increased competition, scheduling problems and a poor market profile are thought to have led to the company's demise.

Nemesis – the direct sale division of Harvey Comics – and Majestic are also closing. Nemesis published the TV spin-off **seaQuest**, the manga-style **Ultraman** and the modern horror title **Frank**, while Majestic produced trading cards, **S.T.A.T.** and **Legacy**. Both were launched only three months ago.

*1994's first major crossover: Image presents Todd McFarlane and Frank Miller's **Spawn-Batman** (visual above), while DC Comics will publish the Klaus Janson illustrated **Batman-Spawn**.* *Feature on page four.*

News: America 2
Major Digressions 14
News: Europe 19
Comics Economics 22
Media File 29
Ranson Notes 30
Advance Listings 32
Retail Index 43
Comment 47
Comment Extra 52
Reviews 60
Mail Order Index 64
Movers & Shakers 68
Letters 72
Classified 75
Events Guide 78

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A Quality Communications magazine

nEWS ·AMERICA·

The return of Doomsday

THE comics event of 1992 was undoubtedly the death of Superman. But the most infuriating aspect of the entire storyline was the lack of information included about Superman's killer, Doomsday.

Now, with the Man of Steel brought back to life, DC Comics is exploring the background and origin of Doomsday in a new 3-issue mini-series, **Superman-Doomsday: Hunter Prey**.

The story takes place one year after the Cyborg Superman (from *The Reign of the Supermen* story line) hurled Doomsday into the depths of space and it deals with the reborn Superman's obsession over the final fate of his killer.

Regular readers will already be aware Doomsday, pronounced dead following the fateful battle with Superman, still lives. His projectile-like launching into space had been accompanied by his inhuman and ominous laugh.

Haunted by the knowledge that if he had returned from the dead Doomsday may have also survived, Superman journeys into space to find out if the creature still lives.

Coupled with an obsession for answers to the mystery of his killer's origin, the Man of Steel sets out to track down the monster's body and, if he still lives, confront him once more, knowing he was the only creature ever to have totally defeated him.

Adding to Superman's problems is the discovery that the cyborg Superman has regenerated and has taken control of the nightmare world of Apokolips.

With the aid of Waverider and Jack Kibry's epic villain, the Apokolips-ruling Darkseid, Superman discovers Doomsday's links to Apokolips and teams up with them to defeat the cyborg.

This leads into a final confrontation between the Man of Steel and the monster which JLA member Booster Gold had christened Doomsday.

Superman-Doomsday: Hunter Killer is written and drawn by the man responsible for DC's record-breaking **Superman** 75, Dan Jurgens. The mini-series is inked by Jurgens' long-time collaborator, Brett Breeding and coloured by former Superman writer-artist Jerry Ordway.

A 48 page prestige mini series, issue one ships on April 12th and will retail for $4.95.

There is no denying that the entire Superman death, rebirth and reign stories sold phenominally well for DC, bringing in many new readers and boosting the flagging career of the Man of Steel. But for the company to now resolve the story with an expensively priced $4.95 mini-series, it could be argued DC is displaying either a lack of faith in the sales potential, or a belief that people willing to pay $1.50 per episode for the original story would also pay $4.95 for a sequel.

This potentially popular series could be seen to have been priced out of the range of many casual readers and adds to the trade's continual quandry over order levels for new comics. Had the story arc been placed within the regular titles, it could have further enhanced their sales without increasing risks or adding to already overcrowded shelf space.

● Another Man of Steel landmark in April is the revelation to the world that Lex Luthor is a villain.

Leading up to the events in **Action Comics** 700, Superman and Lois Lane continue to uncover frightening facts about Luthor and his links to organised crime. Lex, seeing his demise is imminent, decides that if Superman is to stop his plans, he will bring the city of Metropolis down with him.

Celebrating its being the first American comic to reach a 700th issue, **Action Comics** 700 begins the *Fall of Metropolis* story arc. Written by Roger Stern with art by Jackson Guice and Denis Rodier, this standard format title carries the relatively inexpensive $2.95 cover price for its 64 pages, and ships on May 3rd.

New readers: begin here

***Comics International** is a monthly industry newspaper devoted to the comics medium. As such, it provides details of forthcoming UK and US comics and related items, together with reviews and commentary on current titles.*

Certain products mentioned are not available through regular news agent outlets, but only from the 'direct sale' comics specialist retailers and mail order companies. Details of specialist outlets are advertised throughout the magazine, and a listing of the major specialists in Britain is given in our Retail Index and Mail Order Index sections.

***Shipping dates** mentioned for North American titles are the dates copies leave their printers to be air-freighted to distributors for direct sale outlets approximately one week later. These dates and titles do not relate to on sale dates or titles for news agent copies.*

The Marvel and DC titles on general national distribution are on sale in the UK approximately two to three months after the air-freighted copies can be bought through specialist shops and mail order companies dealing with 'advance imports'. Because of the additional shipping costs incurred, these advance copies will be sold at a higher price than the UK price printed on their covers.

***American dollar prices** are listed for US titles with most UK comic shops converting at the rate of 80p = $1.*

Most reputable mail order dealers bear a CoBRA seal on their advertisements. For full details concerning advertisers displaying this Mail Order Protection seal, see page 78.

Deaths and births at Valiant

ARMORINES debuts in March after the success of issue 0, which was published as a stitched insert in **X-0 Manowar** 25.

Written by X-O creator Jorge Gonzalez with art from Jim Calafoire and Rodney Ramos, the series follows a group of government Iron Men, who handle the jobs that are too difficult for the ordinary armed forces.

Valiant is planning to follow up the release of **Armorines** with two further titles during 1994.

● **Starwatchers** is a spin-off from **Magnus, Robot Fighter** and **Rai and the Future Force**, and is scheduled for an August release.

Valiant has dubbed its 1994 output *The Year of the Visitor* and, in its most extended key-issue project to date, the publisher will be revealing information about the central character of its 18th title in its existing comics from summer onwards. Bob Layton's **The Visitor** is to be launched in December 1994.

● Joining the trend of comics companies spotlighting villains in their own showcase titles, Valiant is releasing a special one-shot about major bad-guy Harada.

Harbinger Files: Harada 1 examines the past of this key Valiant villain and chronicles his progress from a wealthy and powerful man to a ruthless egomaniac.

Written by Bob Layton and Fred Pierce, the story takes place after the plane crash in **Solar, Man of the Atom** 3, in which Harada was believed to have died.

Art is by industry veteran Dave Cockrum and Valiant mainstay Gonzalo Mayo.

Harbinger Files: Harada 1 is due to ship during the second week in April and is priced $2.50.

● Valiant's longest running subplot is due to be resolved in the forthcoming **Magnus Robot Fighter** 36 and 37 and **Rai and the Future Force** issues 21 and 22, with the death of Rai a distinct possibility.

The covers to three of the issues (above and below) tell a story on their own, the possible replacement of Rai. Issue 36 of **Magnus Robot Fighter** features a heavily pregnant woman being protected by the robot fighter. The birth of the child on the cover of **Rai** 21 and the death of Rai in 22. Could this be the start of a new Valiant generation?

IN BRIEF

Spidey Super Stories

WITH a full-length feature film in production and a new animated series due to be transmitted by Fox TV this autumn, Spider-Man appears set to follow in the footsteps of Batman's movie and TV stardom.

Widening the character's appeal, Marvel is spotlighting the wall-crawler in a new 32-page magazine for children in the 6-10 age group. **Spider-Man Magazine** will include two new strips (one featuring the X-Men), puzzles, word-searches and interactive features. Cover art is by John Romita, Sr, and #1 is introduced by Stan Lee.

Shipping on February 14, the magazine retails for $1.95 and has a print run of 300,000.

The Ray returns

ALMOST two years after the critically acclaimed series **The Ray**, which catapulted artist Joe Quesada to superstar status, DC comics is to give the reluctant teenage superhero and member of the new Justice League America his own title.

The ongoing series is written by newcomer Chris Priest and follows the hero on his travels around the globe in search of answers to his enigmatic past and that of his father, the Golden Age Ray.

Issue one finds the Ray battling Darkseid's fallen angel of destruction, Brimstone, on Superboy's home turf of Hawaii.

Illustrated by newcomers Howard Porter and Robert Jones, the first issue features a gold foil, multi-level embossed cover. Retailing for $2.95 it ships March 29th.

DC is also issuing **The Ray: In A Blaze of Power**, the original six-part series in a new trade paperback. Written by veteran Jack C Harris with art from Joe Quesada and Art Nichols, the 144 page reprint acts as a prequel to the new series and ships a week earlier.

Wildstorm's Image

JIM Lee is launching a new division within the Image Comics line, Wildstorm Productions, which effectively replaces Lee's former company Aegis Entertainment and becomes the copyright holder for artists working on Jim Lee titles.

Former DC editor Bill Kaplan will oversee production and scheduling of the company's Image comics. Lee has also employed computer artists Ben Fernandez and Joe Dunn to increase the turnover of colour separations, previously one of the principle reasons for the lateness of many of the Jim Lee comics.

Wildstorm Productions currently consists of artists Jim Lee, Ryan Benjamin, Brett Booth, Jeffrey Scott Campbell, Scott Clark, Trevor Scott, Sal Regla and Alex Garner.

Marc Silvestri, Scott Williams, Whilce Portacio and Joe Chiodo will remain with Homage Studios, but operate outside of Wildstorm.

Blade: assassin

BRITISH writer Ian **(Aliens)** Edgington is the man behind the return of **Blade, the Vampire Hunter**, a new ongoing monthly series from Marvel due in April. The Birmingham-based writer's first story arc, is set to brings Dracula back into the Marvel universe.

Blade was first introduced in **Tomb of Dracula** 10, and has more recently appeared in the cancelled **Nightstalkers** title.

The new Blade has been transformed into an occult assassin by his mentor, introduced in this new series.

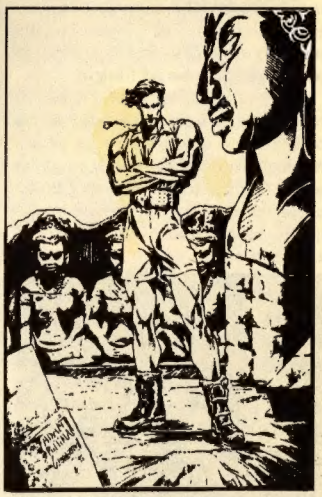
An ageing Russian policeman (complete with a soda-syphon of Holy Water) helps Blade to stir up trouble when needed.

The new band of compatriots is completed by Bible John, an archaeologist, Knights Templar and vampire detector.

The first story arc sees a dragon worshipping branch of the Yakuza resurrect Dracula (which in Romania means dragon) to become their ultimate warrior.

Edgington is also working a proposed **Aliens/Terminator** series for Dark Horse and an issue of Marvel's **Spider-Man 2099** series.

Fifth Defiant title



DEFIANT's latest addition to its growing line of titles is **Charlemagne**. The company's fifth title, it is written by UK film critic and ex-Tundra employee, Phil Nutman, his first comic writing credit. Art is provided by Adam Pollina with inks by Mike **(Ghost Rider)** Witherby.

The comic introduces Charles Smith who, twenty years after his older brother goes missing in action in Viet Nam, discovers his destiny to become Earth's superheroic champion and the most powerful man in the Defiant universe.

The 48 page deluxe first issue ships in April, priced $3.25

IN BRIEF

A Cybernetic Ghost Rider

CAPITALISING on its popular new line of 2099 titles featuring futuristic versions of existing characters, Marvel is to launch a sixth series, **Ghost Rider 2099**.

Unlike the regular **Ghost Rider** which is rooted in the supernatural, this new 2099 hero is a cybernetic computer generated Spirit of Vengeance.

Written by Len **(Iron Man)** Kaminski, and illustrated by the acclaimed **Shade the Changing Man** artist, Chris Bachalo, the new monthly will retailing for $2.25. The first issue ships on March 15th with a foil embossed cover.

Vertigo's Hunter

WHAT happens when you discover you are one of the most powerful magicians on the planet, but only twelve years old? This is the premise of DC's ongoing Vertigo series **The Books of Magic**.

Continuing from the successful Neil Gaiman four issue mini-series of the same name and this year's **Arcana Annual**, the new ongoing series follows the life of Tim Hunter as he copes with the growing magic inside him and the onset of adolescence.

Written by **Wolverine: Killing's** John Ney Reiber and drawn by Gary **(Sandman)** Amaro, this mature readers book reintroduces characters from the mini-series and will feature closely with the continuity of other Vertigo titles. Issue ships April 5th, priced $1.95.

Lobo vs The Big Guy

LOBO reverts to being a suggested for mature readers title in February with a new 4-issue mini series **Lobo: A Contract on Gawd**.

The $1.75 series is produced by the Czarnian's regular writer Alan **(Batman)** Grant, with artwork by Keiron **(X-Men)** Dwyer. Inking on the first issue is by Klaus **(Dark Knight)** Janson, with industry veteran Dick **(Batman)** Giordano inking issues two to four.

Bloodshot Yearbook

KEVIN Van Hook and artist Michael Bair unite to produce Valiant's April-shipping $3.95 **Bloodshot Yearbook** (cover above).

A departure from the style of the regular monthly title, it features a love story as a shell-shocked and seriously wounded Bloodshot finds shelter in the home of a beautiful woman who holds a terrible secret.

As well as in his own title, Bloodshot also has his hands full in April's **Secret Weapons 11**.

Following the early **Avengers** path, the issue introduces a new inexperienced team of operatives under Bloodshot's leadership. It also introduces the new creative team of Maurice Fontenot, Peter Grau and Joe Rubinstein. Highlighting the changes, the issue will ship in brown envelopes marked *Top Secret, Eyes Only*.

Smith & Sakai

FANS of **Bone** and **Usagi Yojimbo** should look at a lower shelf when they visit comic shops in April.

Archie's **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Special 9** will feature both creators work, as Jeff Smith provides cover art and Stan Sakai draws an interior story.

New Spidey mini

SPIDER-MAN'S closer association with Marvel's mutant characters continues with the March shipping 3-issue title **Spider-Man/X-Factor: Shadowgames**.

This $1.95 series is written by Kurt **(Marvels)** Busiek, with art by the creative duo responsible for **Doom 2099**, Pat Broderick and Bruce Patterson.

The plot has Spider-Man reluctantly teaming up with the government mutant superteam to overcome a band of renegade government superhumans, while his best friend Flash Thompson lies at death's door.

***SOLAR, Man of the Atom** #0 is the latest in Valiant's programme of issue zeroes to complement ongoing series. But instead of new background material on popular characters as with earlier issue zeroes, **Solar** #0 will reprint Alpha & Omega from **Solar** #1-12. Shipping in April, the Shooter, Windsor-Smith & Layton production will feature a fold out of the "world's largest comics panel" which depicts the climax to the story. Valiant promises that this special hardcover edition, retailing for $25.00, will not be reprinted.*

Frank Miller returns to Batman; united with Spawn for Image Comics

1994's first major inter-company crossover is due for release in March when DC and Image Comics team up their two most popular characters, Batman and Spawn.

Each publisher will "borrow" the other's character so each can produce a one-shot title with no connection whatsoever between the two comics. Image will release **Spawn/Batman**, while DC's version is called **Batman/Spawn: War Devil**.

Todd McFarlane, creator of **Spawn** and a driving force behind Image comics, is illustrating the Image edition from a script by Frank Miller. Familiar with both characters, Miller had previously guest-scripted the most popular non-McFarlane issue of **Spawn** last year.

Miller is possibly best-known for his redefining of Batman in the mid-eighties through his **Dark Knight Returns** mini-series, but a later dispute led to him ceasing to work for DC.

In enticing Miller back to Batman for the Image published edition, McFarlane offered him the chance to work on the character independently of DC and to "write Batman the way he'd really like to".

McFarlane feels that in reuniting Miller and Batman he has "pulled off another one which nobody else could have pulled off". Undeniably, the coup should result in a major sales boost for the Image title.

DC's **Batman/Spawn: War Devil** is being written by a combination of the Batman-family writers, Doug Moench, Alan Grant and Chuck Dixon. Art is provided by Frank Miller's former collaborator on **Daredevil** and **The Dark Knight Returns**, Klaus Janson.

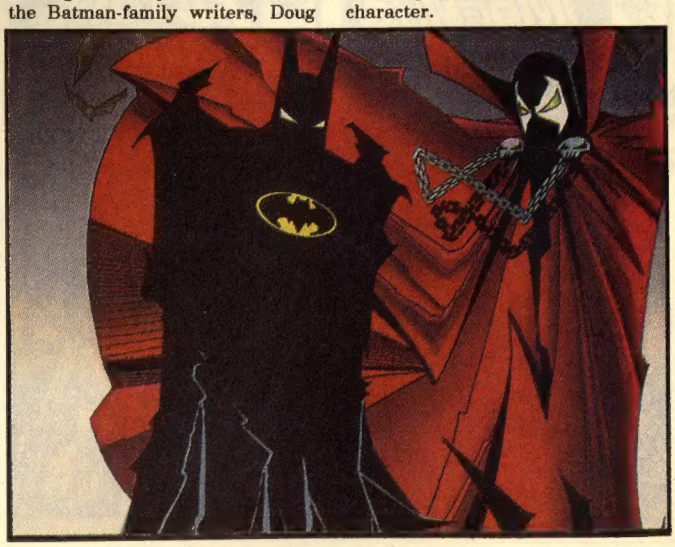
Both the DC and the Image stories have been approved by Batman group editor, Denny O'Neil.

Because of Image's track record for late shipping, McFarlane has promised to the trade that the Image part of the team-up would not be late. To ensure this, he took a three months leave of absence from **Spawn**, allowing Grant Morrison and Greg Capullo to fill in, so he could get ahead on the project.

Commenting on the price of the two 48 page titles, McFarlane said, "Ours is $3.95, DC's is $4.95. To me, that's a strong selling point."

While both are being independently produced, they appear to have similar plotlines. Image presents cyborg zombie killing machines terrorising Gotham, while DC teams up the two vigilantes to prevent Gotham from being overrun by undead hordes, controlled by a mysterious character who seeks mass destruction and the death of Spawn.

The recent **Batman-Judge Dredd: Vendetta in Gotham** sequel and **Batman-Grendel** two-parter proved to be poor sellers. But it is anticipated that, despite DC's higher price for arguably less popular creators' work, this team-up will help restore Batman's status through being paired with America's most popular direct market character.



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Claremont diversifies in '94

FOLLOWING nearly two years out of the spotlight, former X-Men writer Chris Claremont is returning to comics in a big way during 1994.

● **Sovereign Seven** will be the very first creator-owned comic to be set firmly in the existing DC universe. Drawn by Dwayne (**Wolverine**) Turner and guest starring Superman, the first issue is due in September.

● **Prudence and Caution** will be a spin-off from Defiant's **Warriors of Plasm** will debut in May, with artwork by Adam Pollina.

● **Dragonmoon** is the long awaited sequel to **Black Dragon**, with colour and black and white illustrations by John Bolton.

● Claremont is adapting his novel **First Flight** into a comic for DC with artwork from Christian (**Lobo**) Alamy. His third novel, *Sundowners*, is published in June.

● **The Huntsman**, one of the first proposed Image characters is finally to appear in a three issue WildC.A.T.s storyline, as Claremont produces the script for old X-Men partner Jim Lee to draw. It is scheduled to begin in **WildC.A.T.s** 10, due to ship in April.

● **Shadow Moon** sees Claremont collaborating with George (*Star Wars*) Lucas on a new Hollywood project. Maybe this means we will at last discover what evil lurks in the hearts of men.

● Claremont's **Aliens/Predator: Deadliest of the Species** has been rescheduled. Because of his original artist's inability to maintain deadlines, he is being replaced by Eduardo Baretto.

An echo of T.H.U.N.D.E.R.

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents appear fated to have a rougher ride in reality than in any of their printed adventures.

Over the years, the comeback of the cult 1960s Tower super-agents has had many attempts. JC Comics, Archie and Deluxe all produced short-lived series. AC Comics promoted them, but were quickly warned off by the copyright holders.

There were even two UK tries. **Warrior**, believing Deluxe's claim that the team were in the public domain, integrated them into an existing strip for issue #27 onwards. Several episodes were drawn up, but the title folded with #26.

THUNDER Action was a title launched in 1986, partially reprinting the American strips. It lasted four issues.

Comics International gave a cover mention and page two story to the group's revival in 1992, with a story telling that George Caragonne had licensed the characters from copyright holder John Carbonara for his generically named *The Comics* the characters in 1993.

Now, in 1994, Caragonne is heading up **Penthouse Comics** (see elsewhere this issue) and no more has been heard of The Comics Group Inc.

But the latest US trade magazines have been carrying teaser ads for an imminent return of the super-team, again licenced from John Carbonara. The only bad news is that the licensee is Nemesis Comics, who are announced on our cover as ceasing all titles. Next?

Dave Gibbons' 1992 visual for Caragonne's intended relaunch

A realignment at Dark Horse

NEWLY-appointed vice president of publishing at Dark Horse, Dave Scroggy has announced the cancellation of a title after only two of its four issues.

The Blue Lily by Newcastle's Angus McKie is the first victim of the cancellation/postponement policy Scroggy has set in place.

He said of the cancelled book, "The comics marketplace cannot tolerate the long interruptions between issues of a series of this sort and we must act accordingly when deadlines are not met.

"It is unfortunate when the work in question is as well done as this, but we cannot let projects jeopardise the hard-won trust in our ability to ship as promised in our solicitations."

Scroggy also announced that **James Bond 007: A Silent Armageddon** by Cornwall-based artist John M. Burns is postponed until completion is in-house.

Enemy, scheduled for December, has been resolicited for May. Dark Horse would like to relaunch the series with a more prominent sales campaign. This now appears likely with company's latest recruit.

After a short period as Director of Sales for Marvel UK, Lou Bank has been named Dark Horse's new Vice President of Marketing and Sales.

Bank is best known for his six year tenure at Marvel Comics, where, after being the late Carol Kalish's assistant, he went on to become Director of Direct Sales.

Bank said of his appointment, "I am very excited to be joining Dark Horse. I feel the company is very much the way Marvel was when I joined it those many years ago. It's a smaller, more closely knit team."

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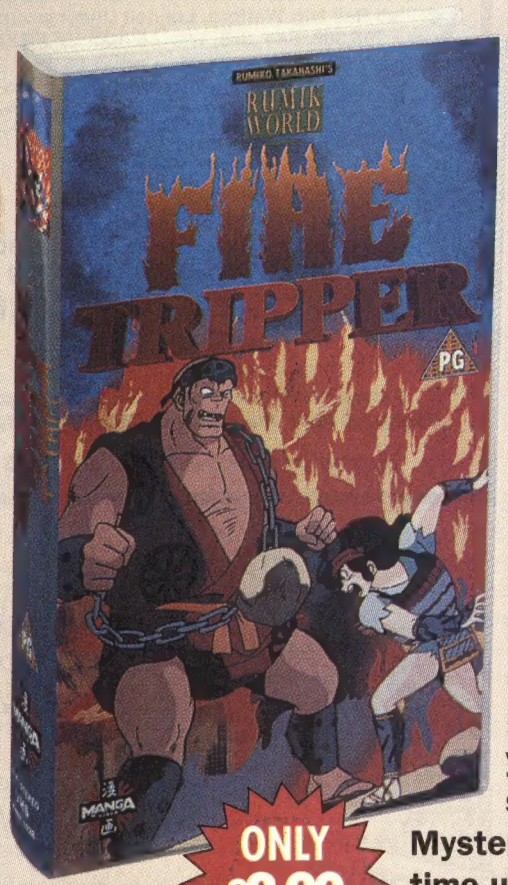

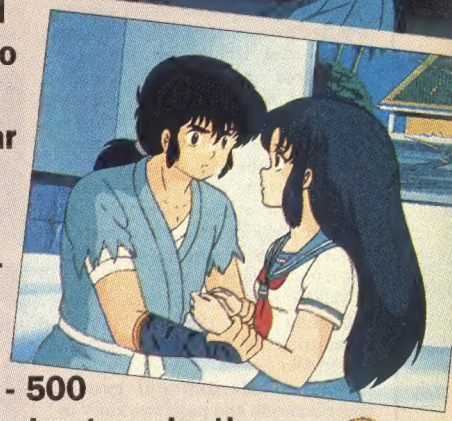

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Milligan & McCarthy's Rogan Gosh compiled as $6.95 Vertigo one-shot

ORIGINALLY presented as a serial in the erstwhile and short-lived Fleetway anthology comic **Revolver**, Brendan McCarthy and Peter Milligan's **Rogan Gosh** finally ships on March 14th as a long-promised 56 page $6.95 full colour collection from DC's Vertigo imprint.

Telling the off-beat story of two young men, a monkey and the bizarre creature known as Rogan Gosh (pictured above), it opens in contemporary London and ends in a futuristic India.

In addition to the retelling of the original story, the Vertigo **Rogan Gosh** special also features a selection of never-before-seen character sketches from Brendan McCarthy and an afterword by Peter Milligan.

IN BRIEF

Convention Season

GREAT Eastern Conventions is staging what is being advertised as the biggest comic show of 1994.

The event takes place at the Jacob Javitz Convention Centre, New York, on February 11, 12 & 13. It promises over a thousand guests including such comic book luminaries as: Frank Miller, John Byrne, Murphy Anderson, Chris Claremont, Peter David, Joe Quesada, Barry Windsor-Smith, Bernie Wrightson, and Matt Wagner.

All of the major comic book publishers will be present at the event which is hoped will attract over 30,000 visitors for the weekend.

Marvel Wedding II

ECLIPSED by the X-Men marriage of Cyclops and Marvel Girl, the other big Marvel wedding of the year is between the Hulk's sidekick Rick Jones and former Hulk girlfriend Marlo Chandler.

The wedding is a three part story which features virtually every superhero and supervillain the Hulk and Rick Jones have ever faced.

Beginning in **Incredible Hulk** 417 with Rick's bachelor party, it continues in #418 with the actual wedding and concludes in **Incredible Hulk Annual** 19, shipping in June.

The series continues to be written by Peter David, with art from Brits Gary Frank and Cam Smith.

Hulk actor dies

TELEVISION veteran and star of *The Incredible Hulk*, *The Magician* and *My Favourite Martian*, Bill Bixby died on November 21st 1993 after a long fight against cancer.

Bixby, 59, played Dr David Banner, the television Hulk's human alter-ego, during the 1970s. He returned to the role during the 1980s for three television movies.

Adult anthology

PENTHOUSE Comix 1 is a new bi-monthly full colour magazine anthology of adult-oriented superhero and science fiction fantasy, being produced for Penthouse by New York based General Media Publishing Group.

March's 96 page debut issue features stories written by George Caragonne, with a host of impressive artists on hand including; Adam (**JLA**) Hughes, Arthur (**Cholly & Flytrap**) Suydam, Garry (**Marvelman**) Leach and Kevin (**Sword of Azrael**) Nowlan. Issue 1 will retail for $4.95.

Bob Guccione, the owner of the Penthouse empire, is promoting the comic's launch heavily, and Markham Novell Communications, one of the largest public relation companies in the world, is handling all media publicity for the titles.

Caragonne, former assistant to Jim Shooter in early months of Valiant comics, responded to the criticism of too much product on the market with "We're confident that the sales on the book are going to be based on the readership of **Penthouse** — which is much bigger than any single comic book in the United States. We are prepared for a long haul because we feel it will succeed in the direct market".

Vertigo Mystery Play

VERTIGO has announced the release of its first original hardcover graphic novel by Grant (**Doom Patrol**) Morrison, painted by **Moonshadow**'s Jon J Muth.

The Mystery Play is an 80-page psychological thriller set in a small English village community torn apart after the death of an actor portraying God in a Renaissance festival play. Ironically, the man accused of his murder is the actor playing Satan.

Retailing for $19.95, the mature readers book ships on February 8th.

New look Nick Fury

MARVEL COMICS attempts to resurrect the fortunes of Nick Fury with a one-shot special which will redefine the character for the nineties.

Fury is written by Barry Dutter, most noted for his humour work on Marvel's **What The...?!** and the *Bullpen Bulletins* page. The special will explore the true origins of the World War II hero and the organisation he helped form, S.H.I.E.L.D.

With art by M.C. Wyman and Chris Ivy, the 64 page special retails for $2.95 and ships on March 15th.

Malibu returns

MALIBU Comics has announced that, effective with April shipping titles, it reduces its 60-day returns policy on late-shipping books to a precedent setting 30 days.

This is a direct result of Diamond Distributors reduction of its return/cancellation allowance from 90 days to 60 days.

IN BRIEF

More Looney Tunes

WARNER Bros animated characters return to comics in March this year in a new ongoing series.

Looney Tunes, based on the popular Warner TV show, is an anthology title featuring popular characters Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Wile E Coyote and Road Runner.

Retailing for $1.50, the new series features a host of mainstream cartoonists and artists, including UK creator Andrew (**X-Men Adventures**) Wildman.

Northstar's solo flight

Following the events in the final issue of **Alpha Flight** (#130), Marvel's gay superhero is to appear in his own four-issue limited series.

Northstar 1 sees the Canadian superhero quitting the team after being implicated in the injuries sustained by team-mate Aurora. He soon finds himself ostracised by heroes the world over.

Written by **Alpha Flight** regular Simon Furman and with art by Dario Carrasco Jr, the series retails for $1.75 and is to ship on March 8.

Comics Stateside

WITH orders already in excess of 35,000 copies, **The Comic Book** is a new hardcover book about comics from Ebury Press by Stateside Comics Director, Paul Sassienie.

It features comprehensive chapters on the history of comics, comics culture, collecting, grading and assessing, how to use price guides, and related merchandise.

Shipping in May, priced $35.00, the 256 page book is illustrated throughout with covers from the Golden Age of comics through to the present day.

Extreme lateness

DESPITE the very late appearance of Extreme Studios' instalment of the Image/Valiant crossover **Deathmate Red**, their **Deathmate Epilogue** shipped on time, but with a 15% imposed reduction in retailers' orders to help sales.

The decision to reduce orders was taken when both companies decided that they would not allow returns on the title.

Malibu goes public

MALIBU Comics is launching an extensive new advertising campaign utilising American broadcast television among its promotions.

The television commercial features a bungy jumping stunt, establishing a prevalent theme which will be featured in Malibu's printed ads.

The advertising campaign, christened "Jump On Now" starts with a 30 second commercial developed by the company's own Malibu Films. To further the impact of this campaign, Malibu has created ads both for bus stop shelters and the sides of buses.

"It's not enough for Malibu, or any publisher for that matter, to merely mine the existing market with ever increasing special issues," said Malibu Editor-in-Chief Chris Ulm. "Such an approach amounts to little more than preaching to the converted... If we want to succeed as a major entertainment entity, we have to reach out beyond out#r core and draw in new fans."

Elseworld Annuals

AFTER the disappointing sales on their *Bloodlines*-themed 1993 annuals, DC has opted for non-related stories in this year's annuals but utilising a popular proven theme. DC is taking the *Elseworlds* concept of alternative time lines and expanding it across the entire range of annuals.

Beginning in April, the first four *Elseworlds* annuals are: **Catwoman Annual** 1, **Superman: Man of Steel Annual** 3, **Team Titans Annual** 2 and **Legion of Superheroes Annual** 5.

Licensed Dinosaurs

TOPPS Comics has announced a new authorised version of **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs**, based on Mark Schultz's award-winning series **Xenozoic Tales**, currently published by Kitchen Sink Press and previously licensed to Epic.

Written by Roy Thomas, the first three issues will be drawn by Dick Giordano while William Stout will provide covers.

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs is set in a post-cataclysm 26th century. Human survivors — who have lived underground for five centuries — discover that prehistoric reptiles have reappeared on the planet.

The series follows the adventures of two survivors, Jack "Cadillac" Tenrac and Hannah "Dinosaur" Dundee, in their search for the enigmatic Professor Fessenden.

Conan: a return to greatness

Conan the Adventurer & **Conan Classics** are two April releases which firmly re-establish the Cimmerian barbarian back in the Marvel forefront.

Conan the Adventurer has Roy Thomas returning to the character which he spearheaded in 1970 and will faithfully adapt Conan's youthful exploits from the original stories by Robert E. Howard.

The series is drawn by former First Comics **Elric** artist Rafael Kayanan in a style remarkably similar to Barry Smith's award-winning early 1970s comics version.

Shipping on April 19th, the first issue will feature a multi-embossed cover with foil stamping and will retail for $2.50.

Tying in with the release of the new Conan stories is a reprint series **Conan Classic**, which will reprint the original Roy Thomas and Barry Smith series from the early seventies.

Issue 1 features "The Coming of Conan", reprinting **Conan the Barbarian** 1. It ships on April 12th and retails for $1.50.

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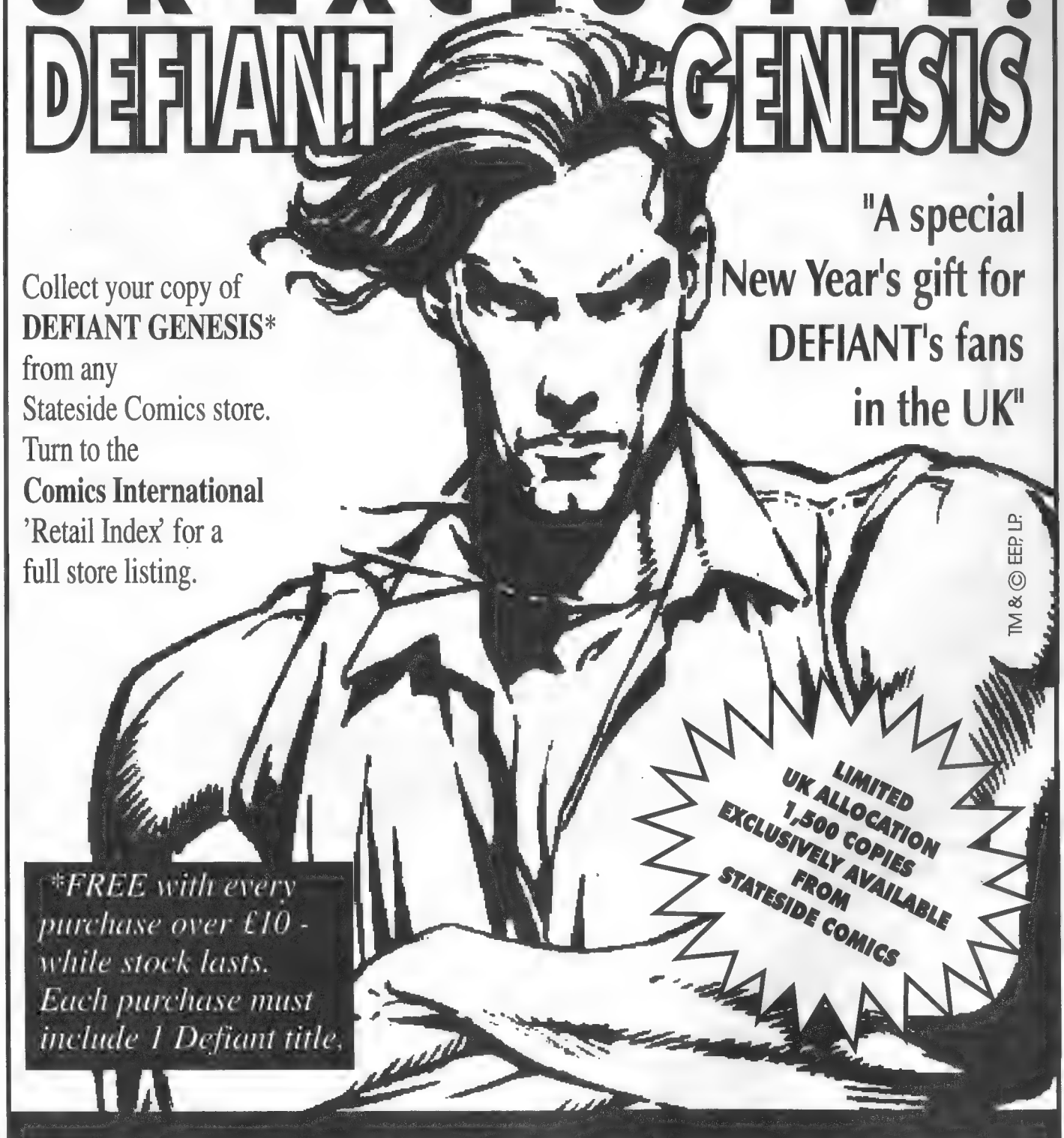

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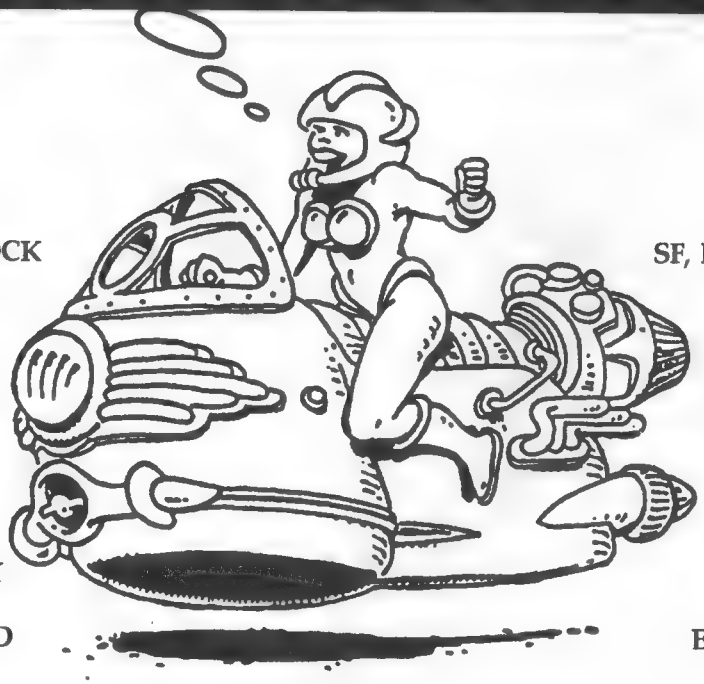

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MAJOR DIGRESSIONS

Political Correctness in Comics

Peter David, writer of comics, paperbacks, film scripts and stuff, contributes a weekly column, "But I Digress" to US trade paper ***The Comic Buyer's Guide****. In addition to appearing monthly in* ***Comics International****, his columns have been compiled by Krause Publications into a 258 page paperback, available in all good comic shops this month.*

POLITICAL correctness is rearing its head everywhere. Even those worshippers of the whacked, the Addams Family — particularly the children — are treading ever so lightly in that direction. (No, this isn't a movie review column — merely an illustration of mindsets, that's all.)

Granted, the kids are at top demonic form in the opening minutes of *Addams Family Values*. For example, in a sequence that would have made Galileo proud, Wednesday (Christina Ricci) and Pugsley (Jimmy Workman) duplicate the legendary Tower of Pisa falling-objects experiment. In this instance, though, the young Addamses elect to drop for comparison's sake — not lead objects of varying weight — but rather a 20-pound cannonball and their newly acquired, greatly despised baby brother, Pubert.

There is not the slightest hesitation in Wednesday's demeanour, as — in the name of science — she chucks the infant off the roof of the decrepit mansion. Only a fortunate catch by Gomez averts apparent catastrophe. (I say "apparent" because, later in the film, Pubert gives indications of being indestructible: in one sequence, he's hurled through — and shatters — a stained glass skylight, rockets approximately 20,000 feet in the air, descend at, we assume, 32 feet per second/per second, lands back in the mansion on a hardwood floor — and giggles. Although not implicitly stated at the end of the film, one would think that Wednesday and Pugsley won't be bothering with further assassination attempts. Clearly such endeavours would be futile, if Pubert could survive all that with nary a scratch.)

Nevertheless, Wednesday and Pugsley's murderous endeavours are small change compared to what they do later in the film. The youngsters are unwillingly sent to summer school, where all manner of cheery fun is inflicted on them at perky and upper-crust Camp Chippewa.

I'm sure I'm not ruining surprises for anyone when I indicate that Wednesday and Pugsley do not wind up leaving the camp in mint condition.

What's curious is that, when the expected and inevitable destruction does occur, it's the most politically correct vandalism in film history. Apparently, the kids could not just trash the camp simply because they're vindictive, amoral little monsters. No, the campers and administrators had to have it coming.

How so? Well, first, the camp is so saccharine that even moviegoers were dying to take a machine gun to the place. And, second, the kids' actions are taken in the name of downtrodden Indians (Native Americans, whatever), not to mention Jews, Hispanics, paraplegics, and every other socio-economic and/or ethnic group that could be tossed in.

It's not simply mayhem. It's righteous mayhem. Wednesday and Pugsley aren't committing wanton assault and property damage; they're making a political statement. Which makes it "OK."

So, if even the Addams Family is not immune from the needs and constraints of behaving in politically correct fashion, then how can anyone be safe?

Well, don't worry, readers. I'm here to try make things better. I will now present a guide for any future comicbook writers out there (See? There's this month's requisite tie to comics — kind of like a gratuitous fight scene in a Marvel comic book), so that they will know precisely what to avoid.

After all, political correctness is little more than the term that computer board fans have coined for revising continuity to suit present-day requirements: retcon (short for *ret*roactive *con*tinuity). Being PC requires reordering history, and occasionally reality, to fit the utopian ideal. Ironically, if the absurdly perfect world of **Star Trek** ever comes about, it will be because of political correctness has been

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elevated to the status of religion.

(And if you need proof that PC, taken to its ultimate conclusion, would result in a boring world, you need look no further than a recent *Next Gen* episode in which Captain Picard and Dr. Crusher developed the ability to read each other's thoughts. Now, I'm sorry, but if I were stranded with a long-term female acquaintance — particularly if she looked like Gates McFadden — and she could read my mind, the first thing I'd be thinking is "Oh, God, I'd better not picture her naked or I'll never hear the end of it." Which is, naturally, like being told not to think about pink elephants. And, equally naturally, that didn't happen in the episode. It was, in fact, an amazingly boring instalment, considering the possibilities. It was, however, as pleasingly PC as Trek ever is.)

So, as you would-be writers prepare to enter the increasingly dangerous world of character portrayal, let us remember a few things:

1) A woman is always judged by her breast size. Always. If a woman has large breasts, that is insulting to other women. I'm not sure why, but it is. So all women should have small breasts. If, by some quirk, they have large breasts, then avoid perpetuating a stereotype by making sure they are very smart.

(This despite the fact that some women are so brain-dead that they have themselves surgically altered in order to have large breasts. Such self-mutilations are, of course, not their fault, but, instead, are the fault of the men who wanted women to have large breasts — except men shouldn't have thought that way and shouldn't have pressured women, who are to be absolved from it, in case they caved in to the pressure.)

This, however, is not really good enough, because, if a woman is smart but has large breasts, then the only reason she has large breasts is in order to make her intelligence less threatening to men, and therefore they are, in fact, insulting, since men can't deal with a smart woman unless she has big breasts. So big brain and small breasts is the way to go — except, of course, the implication is that no woman of any brains can possibly have large breasts, which is insulting to those women who might or might not wish they had large breasts or who have large breasts but are afraid that people will think they are, in fact, stupid.

2) No Italian has now or ever been or ever will-be a member of any organised crime group. Ignore anomalies like the Gambino crime family. The concept of a gangster who is Italian is cliched, outmoded and should be avoided. For that matter, any unflattering portrayal of any Italian person would be playing into that thuggish image and should be avoided.

3) No Japanese person should be portrayed using a camera. Furthermore, presenting any Japanese character in any sort of insulting fashion perpetuates Japan-bashing and should be avoided, since it can lead to various unsavoury consequences.

4) Never show siblings engaged in hostile relationships, as it may lead to imitative behaviour. I guarantee that the very next instance of a brother injuring a baby brother will be blame on *Addams Family Values*. No children were ever destructive or hostile prior to such portrayals in entertainment media, unless you count Cain and Abel.

5) Never show black people as thieves, rapists, hitmen, pimps, or whores, since this perpetuates stereotypes. Blacks are permitted to be heroes (although constant elevation of blacks to hero status is putting them to a transparently heroic ideal and, hence, is artificial) or funny (but not in a self-deprecating or racially insulting manner). Also, they're not black — they're African-American. Yes, I know that term makes as much sense as my calling myself an Israeli-American. Doesn't matter. You're not talking about something making sense. You're talking about American society in the 1990s.

6) You can have a character who's stupid, but he can't be Polish. Polish people are not to be portrayed as stupid, as that is a cliche. This of course, sets them apart from the rest of humanity, which is allowed to be stupid except for the above conditions.

7) Jews can't be cheap. Nor can Scotsmen, except for Scrooge McDuck, which is permissable, since the Duck Lobby is really pretty pathetic right now, especially because their leader is Donald Duck and no one ever knows what he's saying. Which brings us to:

8) No characters with speech impediments and especially no characters with lisps. Not only is

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that insulting to people who lisp, but there's also a direct insinuation that the character is gay, and, since lisping gay characters are a stereotype, that should be avoided, as well.

9) Avoid depicting any of the following as having a drinking problem: Scotsmen, Irishmen, Hispanics, blacks, Native Americans. They can, however, all smoke — but only if they're tough. Gay characters can drink, if they're tragic about it. And speaking of:

10) Gay characters. Major hassle. Be conservative, and the liberals will say you copped out. (Example: in **Incredible Hulk** 413, I put across that the character of Hector was gay without coming right out and saying it. Bam. Readers jumped on me.) Be liberal, and the censors will make your publisher's life a living hell. (Example: **Justice League Task Force** 8, I had two women in a passionate kiss. Despite the fact that one of them happened to be a shape-shifted J'onn J'onzz, this was insufficient for the intrepid Comics Code Authority. Steadfastly serving the public good, the CCA registered objections with DC over the portrayal of homosexual behaviour. The CCA eventually relented, after DC fought them on it.) I don't know what to tell you folks about this one. Probably comics should take the lead of the US military and institute a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

11) Arabs should not be depicted as savage or terrorists or in any way disreputable. Disney, the company that made the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science knuckle under and grovel when it came to tacky portrayals of Snow White, in turn redubbed opening lines from *Aladdin* so as not to offend Arab groups. Whether Disney did so out of sensitivity to a group's concerns, or because the lessons of the World Trade Centre bombing were not lost on them, remains unclear. Disney did, however, choose not to act upon the complaints that Aladdin himself did not speak with an Arabian accent.

With all the foregoing to consider, who, then, becomes fair game? Whom can you do whatever you want to and depict in whatever manner you choose, without serious consequences?

1) White people, particularly White Incredibly Moneyed People. (WIMPS for short. Safer than WASPs. Why annoy Protestants?) WIMPs were the prime target for Wednesday and Pugsley's wrath in *Addams Family Values*. In general, white people who are not beholden to any single group are nothing to worry about. Not for one microsecond did any one think that an acquittal of Reginald Denny's assailants would result in hordes of marauding white people stampeding the streets of LA.

2) French people, Brits, and people from the Netherlands. Witness Disney: Consider that neither Belle nor Gaston spoke with a French accent in *Beauty and the Beast*, and Snow White and Cinderella did not speak like denizens of the Netherlands (although they did sport wooden shoes). Nor did Winnie the Pooh have a British accent. Insult a Frog. Be snide to a Limey. It's OK. What're they gonna do? Be snooty? They do that, anyway. Better yet, take potshots at the Swiss. *They're neutral, for God's sake!* Can't ask for a better target.

3) You can insult Native Americans, but, if you apologise while you're doing it, you can get away with it.

4) I think you can do anything you want with Greeks. I'm not sure about this. I *think* that's unexplored territory, but I could be wrong. There's only one way to find out:

Hey! In Greece, how do they separate the men from the boys?

With a crowbar!

There, if we get angry letters from a PC Greek group, I'll let you know immediately and you can cross them off your list.

If you're daring, you might also try to mix and match. New combinations of stereotypes might serve to confuse people and buy you some time until they can regroup and form a new protest branch. So you might try, for example:

1) A terrorist Scotswoman.

2) An alcoholic Jewish pimp.

3) A black Mafioso.

4) An Arab who was so dumb, he thought a dromedary was a theatrical milk store.

5) A closet gay man with big breasts.

There's five more characters right there. Make them mutants, you're all set. And even more important. You'll be safe. Which is better than sorry.

Peter David, writer of stuff, has heard and read the word "penis" — courtesy of the Bobbitts — more times in the past 3 months than he had in the previous 3 decades combined. Yet not a single televised news report led with what he thought would have considered the ideal intro: Bill Murray in ***Ghostbusters****, deadpanning, "It's true. This man has no dick.")*

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NEWS
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More support for women's imprint

DYKE'S Delight, the anthology comic produced by lesbian women, is to become an ongoing series with the second issue appearing in February or March.

Launched as a speculative one-shot to coincide with Lesbian & Gay Pride in June 1993, the book was a critical and commercial success. Although ongoing, **Dyke's Delight** will be irregularly published in tandem with its sister title **Fanny**, the all-women creators' anthology produced by Knockabout Comics, London.

"The reason that **Dyke's Delight**, and **Fanny** are ongoing but irregular is simple lack of funding," said publisher Carol Bennett. "We've proved that the interest is there, the readers and the contributors are out there; but I won't schedule the next comic until the money's there in the bank to pay for it — too many people in this business have gone bust running up debts!"

Edited by cartoonist Kate Charlesworth, **Dyke's Delight** 2 will feature contributions from Charlesworth, Jeremy Dennis, Lucy Byatt and other artists yet to be determined. Both **Dyke's Delight**, and **Fanny**, will be available through Diamond Distributors.

Women comics creators are invited to contribute to future issues of both **Fanny** and **Dyke's Delight**; xeroxed samples of work should be sent to Carol Bennett, Knockabout Comics, Unit 6a, Acklam Workshops, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ. Return postage should be included.

No S*x, please

THE London Cartoon Centre's class of winter 1993 has produced a one-shot comic, **The Joy of S*x**, showcasing its work.

Through a series of vignettes, the creators take a cynical look at love, sex and relationships in the 1990s through the eyes of diverse characters such as a nostalgic tightrope-walker, a virtual reality addict, a boy, a girl and a swimsuit special and Gonad, the sperm that walks.

"We chose sex as a subject because we wanted the book to attract attention," said a spokesman for the group. "But we don't want it to sell under false pretences. It's primarily a satirical comic, and while there is explicit language and nudity, it's not what some people might consider a "wank comic", by any means!"

The anthology features work by Sam Allen, Penny Blaney, Paul Carter, Fung Cheung, Martin Cutbill, Bryan Dawson, Shabazz Graham, Howard Stangroom and many more.

The Joy of S*x is a 44-page A4-format black and white magazine, and is available for £1.50 at London comic shops or by post, priced £1.75 (cheques to The Portobello Trust, stating you are over 18) from:
Steve Marchant,
The London Cartoon Centre,
14 Conlan Street,
London W10 5AR.

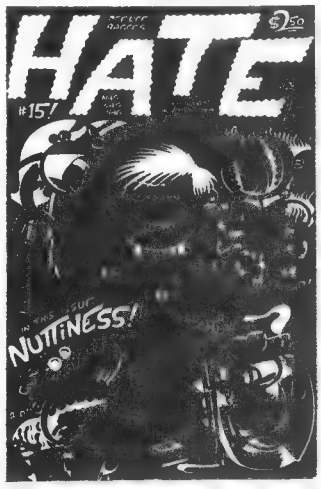
Comics Creators' Guild announces awards for 1993

report by Howard Stangroom

THE Comics Creators' Guild, Britain's largest organisation of industry professionals and devotees, presented the 1993 CCG Awards for achievement in the medium at its Christmas gathering in December.

Despite having received a disappointingly small number of nominations from its 150+ membership, an awards committee finally determined the winners. They are as follows:

The Frank Bellamy Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Medium:
Jack Kirby.
Special Achievement Award 1993:
Scott McLeod, for **Understanding Comics**.
Best Ongoing Title:
Cud, by Terry LaBan.
Best Cover: **Dark Horse Presents** 75, by Charles Vess.



*above: **Hate** by Peter Bagge, winner of the best humour strip award.*

Best Newspaper Strip:
Calvin & Hobbes, by Bill Watterson.
Best Monthly Title:
Action Comics, by Stern & Guice.
Best Humour Strip:
Hate, by Peter Bagge.
Best Weekly Strip:
Firebrand in **2000AD**, by John Smith and Paul Marshall.
Best One-Off:
Casanova, by Hunt Emerson.
Best Limited Series:
Enigma, by Pete Milligan & Duncan Fegrado.
Best Anthology:
Gay Comix, by Andy Mangels.
Best Small Press/Self-Published:
Exit, by N Kanan.
Foreign Work Most Deserving of Translation into English:
Les Lutins, by Pierre Dubois and Stephane Duval.

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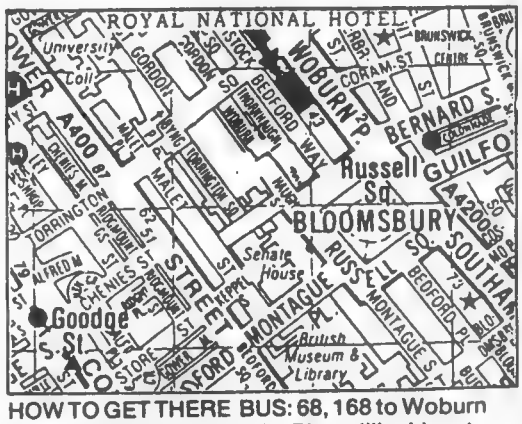

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IN BRIEF

Roy's artistic search

Roy of the Rovers editor Stuart Green is looking for artists with a good grasp of anatomy, action-oriented work and, naturally, a strong awareness of football.

Artists with a good sense of visual storytelling wishing to submit their work should send photocopies only to Stuart at **Roy of the Rovers**, 25-31 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9FU. He guarantees replies to all submissions, but no time-frame can be guaranteed.

Characterising the sort of creators he's looking for, Green professed himself "absolutely desperate to find artists with traditional values and the Busby-like virtues."

After Andy Capp, Green feels that Roy is the most famous comics character in the UK, appearing also in the 200,000 print run **Shoot**, and with the character's 40th birthday in August, the event should prove significant enough to warrant national press coverage.

Druid Heroes

CM Comics has announced an April shipping date for an additional title under its Monoverse imprint, established after a huge creator response to news of Chris Morgan's first self-published comic.

Stonehenge 1, shipping with companion titles **Brit Force**, **Alleycat** and **Deathsheart**, is a solo title for the Brit Force team member, and is an ongoing series.

Written by Darren Smithson, with art from John Kirvan and Paul Simmons, **Stonehenge** is published on a bi-monthly schedule, priced at £1.60. CM titles are available through comics retail outlets or directly from the publisher at CM Comics, 29 Larch Road, Maybush, Southampton SO1 6ES.

Public Awareness

THE Chaos City Comics-published **AIDS Awareness** comic is now on sale, with proceeds to be donated to the Terrance Higgins Trust.

AIDS Awareness is written by Steve Lowis, with artwork by a host of British artists, including Dave Gibbons, Bryan Hitch, Charlie Adlard, Henry Flint, Liam Sharp and John Ridgway. Cover art is by by Simon Bisley.

The title is available in three versions — standard, gold and a special double-covered limited edition. The **AIDS Awareness** comic can be obtained from all good comics shops, retailing at £4.95 for the regular and gold editions and £24.95 for the 1,000 copy limited print run premium edition.

Deadline 1994

DEADLINE, the critically-acclaimed UK anthology magazine, has recently announced its publishing and promotion schedules for 1994.

Strips for the 1994 schedule include a 48-page biography of Tank Girl by Alan Martin and Jamie Hewlett.

Also on the agenda are *Rockdrill*, a new series by Garry Marshall and Chris Webster, a third volume of **Hugo Tate** by Nick Abadzis, a new Pleece brothers series and a selection of short stories by Phillip Bond, David Hine, Paul Johnson, Al Columbia and Matt Brooker.

A free trading card will be mounted on the cover of **Deadline** 59 — a companion card for the series produced in conjunction with Floppy Tongue Comics.

Blackball premieres

BLACKBALL, risen from the ashes of Tundra UK, has announced the publication of a new anthology title, **Blackball Comics**.

Destined for both the domestic and US market, the British-produced comic features some material originally commissioned for Tundra UK by Blackball publisher Dave Elliot. The first 48-page issue is due for a May release.

With a Simon Bisley cover, the premiere issue features Keith Giffen's former Image comics character, Trencher. Kev O'Neill's new creation John Pain and a Shawn McManus-drawn strip, A Girl and Her Frog.

Retailing for $3.00, **Blackball Comics** 1 will also include a number of pin-up pages introducing future strips.

Dangerous Visions

CISSIE Comics is a new small press series from Glasgow.

Patrick McGovern and Robert Jeffrey have created this **Punisher** and **Bogie Man** parody, and have limited the print-run on the first **Cissie Comics** issue to 100 copies.

The title is their first foray into the publishing world, and can, be obtained directly from Dangerous Comics for £1 (inc post & packing), from 3/1 117 Onslow Drive, Dennistoun, Glasgow G31 2QA.

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COMICS ECONOMICS

The direct sale market now represents over 85% of US comics publishers sales revenue. The following shows the top titles ordered through the four leading UK & US direct sales distributors. As such it does not reflect retail sales, but instead total orders placed by traders anticipating their retail sales three months ahead.

Direct Market order charts: January 1994 titles

Titan Distributors (UK) Top 50 Titles

1	X-Men 30 ($1.95)	Marvel	26	Superman: Man of Steel 31 ($1.50)	DC
2	Uncanny X-Men 310 ($1.95)	Marvel	27	Action Comics 697 ($1.50)	DC
3	Spawn 20 ($1.95)	Image	28	Maxx 7 ($1.95)	Image
4	X-Force 32 ($1.25)	Marvel	29	Cyberforce 3 ($1.95)	Image
5	Sandman 58 ($1.95)	DC	30	Daredevil 326 ($1.25)	Marvel
6	X-Factor 100 ($1.25)	Marvel	31	Tales of the Jedi 4 ($2.95)	Dark Horse
7	X-Men Unlimited 4 ($3.95)	Marvel	32	Lobo 4 ($1.75)	DC
8	X-Men 2099 #6 ($1.25)	Marvel	33	Spider-Man 44 ($1.75)	Marvel
9	Batman 505 ($1.50)	DC	34	Music of the Spears 1 (2.50)	Dark Horse
10	Wolverine 79 ($1.75)	Marvel	35	Fantastic Four 386 ($1.25)	Marvel
11	Hellblazer 75 ($1.95)	DC	36	Swamp Thing 140 ($1.95)	DC
12	Detective Comics 672 ($1.50)	DC	37	Savage Dragon 8 ($1.95)	Image
13	Legends/Dark Knight 57 ($1.75)	DC	38	Silver Surfer 90 ($1.25)	Marvel
14	Previews vol 4 #1 ($2.00)	Diamond	39	Avengers 372 ($1.25)	Marvel
15	Shadow of the Bat 25 ($1.75)	DC	40	Stormwatch 8 ($1.95)	Image
16	Excalibur 75 ($3.50)	Marvel	41	Aliens: Labyrinth 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse
17	Gambit 4 ($2.00)	Marvel	42	Catwoman 8 ($1.75)	DC
18	Sin City 3 ($2.50)	Dark Horse	43	New Warriors 45 ($1.25)	Marvel
19	Aliens/Predator 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse	44	Venom: Enemy Within 2 ($2.95)	Marvel
20	Spider-Man 2099 #17 ($1.25)	Marvel	45	The ClanDestine 1 ($1.95)	Marvel UK
21	Cable 9 ($2.00)	Marvel	46	Shade the Changing Man 45 ($1.95)	DC
22	Incredible Hulk 415 ($1.25)	Marvel	47	Codename: Strykeforce 2 ($1.95)	Image
23	Amazing Spider-Man 387 ($1.25)	Marvel	48	Predator Bad Blood 2 (2.50)	Dark Horse
24	Superman 87 ($1.50)	DC	49	Force Works 1 ($2.95)	Marvel
25	Adventures/Superman 510 ($1.50)	DC	50	Legends/World's Finest 2 ($4.95)	DC

First Choice Wholesale (UK) Top 50 Titles

1	Spawn 20 ($1.95)	Image	26	Superman Man of Steel 31 ($1.50)	DC
2	X-Men 30 ($1.25)	Marvel	27	X 1 ($1.95)	Dark Horse
3	Uncanny X-Men 310 ($1.25)	Marvel	28	Maxx 7 ($1.95)	Image
4	Rune 1 ($1.95)	Malibu	29	Superman 87 ($1.50)	DC
5	X-Force 32 ($1.25)	Marvel	30	Action Comics 697 ($1.50)	DC
6	X-Factor 100 ($2.95)	Marvel	31	Wrath 1 ($1.95)	Malibu
7	Sandman 57 ($1.95)	DC	32	Spider-Man 44 ($1.75)	Marvel
8	'Breed 1 ($1.95)	Malibu	33	Superboy 2 ($1.50)	DC
9	Wolverine 78 ($1.75)	Marvel	34	Cyberforce 3 ($1.95)	Image
10	Hellblazer 75 ($2.95)	DC	35	Spider-Man 2099 #17 ($1.25)	Marvel
11	Batman 505 ($1.50)	DC	36	Adventures/Superman 510 ($1.50)	DC
12	Gambit 4 ($2.00)	Marvel	37	Excalibur 75 ($3.95)	Marvel
13	Amazing Spider-Man 387 ($1.25)	Marvel	38	The ClanDestine 1 ($1.95)	Marvel UK
14	Lobo 4 ($1.75)	DC	39	Sin City 3 ($1.95)	Dark Horse
15	Daredevil 326 ($1.25)	Marvel	40	Swamp Thing 140 ($1.95)	DC
16	Detective Comics 672 ($1.50)	DC	41	Spectac Spider-Man 210 ($1.25)	Marvel
17	Music of the Spears 1 (2.50)	Dark Horse	42	Venom: Enemy Within 2 ($2.95)	Marvel
18	X-Men 2099 #6 ($1.25)	Marvel	43	Predator Bad Blood 2 (2.50)	Dark Horse
19	Aliens/Predator 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse	44	Savage Dragon 8 ($1.95)	Image
20	Shadow of the Bat 25 ($1.75)	DC	45	Breakthru 2 ($2.50)	Malibu
21	Tales of the Jedi 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse	46	New Warriors 45 ($1.25)	Marvel
22	Legends of Dark Knight 58 ($1.75)	DC	47	Catwoman 8 ($1.75)	DC
23	Incredible Hulk 415 ($1.25)	Marvel	48	Marvels 3 ($5.95)	Marvel
24	Cable 9 ($2.00)	Marvel	49	Fantastic Four 386 ($1.25)	Marvel
25	X-Men Unlimited 4 ($3.95)	Marvel	50	Aliens: Labyrinth 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse

Diamond Distributors (US) Top 50 Titles

1	X-Men 30 ($1.95)	Marvel	26	Savage Dragon 8 ($1.95)	Image
2	Spawn 20 ($1.95)	Image	27	Codename: Strykeforce 2 ($1.95)	Image
3	Uncanny X-Men 310 ($1.25)	Marvel	28	Shadow of the Bat 25 4 ($1.75)	DC
4	Beavis & Butt-head 1 ($1.95)	Marvel	29	Venom Enemy Within 2 ($2.95)	Marvel
5	X-Factor 100 ($2.95)	Marvel	30	Steel 2 ($1.50)	DC
6	Superman 87 ($1.50)	DC	31	Supergirl 2 ($1.50)	DC
7	Wolverine 79 ($1.75)	Marvel	32	Cable 9 ($2.00)	Marvel
8	Gambit 4 ($2.00)	Marvel	33	Spider-Man 2099 #16 ($1.25)	Marvel
9	Cyberforce 3 ($1.95)	Image	34	Spider-Man 44 ($1.75)	Marvel
10	Adventures/Superman 510 ($1.50)	DC	35	Team Youngblood #5 ($1.95)	Image
11	Superman Man of Steel 31 ($1.50)	DC	36	Ninjak 3 ($2.25)	Valiant
12	X-Men Unlimited 4 ($3.95)	Marvel	37	Prophet 5 ($1.95)	Image
13	X-Men 2099 #6 ($1.25)	Marvel	38	Force Works 1 ($3.95)	Marvel
14	Action Comics 697 ($1.50)	DC	39	X 1 ($2.00)	Dark Horse
15	X-Force 32 ($1.25)	Marvel	40	Simpson Comics 2 ($1.95)	Bongo
16	Batman 505 ($1.50)	DC	41	Daredevil 425 ($2.95)	Marvel
17	Maxx 7 ($1.95)	Image	42	Captain America 425 ($2.95)	Marvel
18	Detective Comics 672 ($1.50)	DC	43	Catwoman 8 ($1.75)	DC
19	Green Lantern 50 ($2.95)	DC	44	Robin 5 ($1.50)	DC
20	Shadowman 0 ($3.50)	Valiant	45	Tales of the Jedi 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse
21	Rune 1 ($1.95)	Malibu	46	Freak Force 2 ($1.95)	Image
22	Amazing Spider-Man 387 ($1.25)	Marvel	47	Stormwatch Sourcebook 0 ($2.50)	Image
23	Superboy 2 ($1.50)	DC	48	Punisher War Journal 64 ($2.95)	Marvel
24	Excalibur 75 ($3.50)	Marvel	49	Legends/Dark Knight 58 ($1.75)	DC
25	Stormwatch 8 ($1.95)	Image	50	Ren & Stimpy 16 ($1.75)	Marvel

Capital City Distribution (US) Top 50 Titles

1	X-Men 30 ($1.95)	Marvel	26	Cable 9 ($2.00)	Marvel
2	Beavis & Butt-Head 1 ($1.95)	Marvel	27	Shadowman 0 ($3.50)	Valiant
3	Uncanny X-Men 310 ($1.95)	Marvel	28	Supergirl 2 ($1.50)	DC
4	Spawn 20 ($1.95)	Image	29	Stormwatch 8 ($1.95)	Image
5	X-Factor 100 ($2.95)	Marvel	30	Spider-Man 2099 #17 ($1.25)	Marvel
6	Gambit 4 ($2.00)	Marvel	31	Force Works 1 ($2.95)	Marvel
7	Wolverine 79 ($1.75)	Marvel	32	Spider-Man 44 ($1.75)	Marvel
8	X-Men 2099 #6 ($1.25)	Marvel	33	Daredevil 326 ($1.25)	Marvel
9	Superman 87 ($1.50)	DC	34	Codename Strykeforce 2 ($1.95)	Image
10	X-Force 32 ($1.25)	Marvel	35	Rune 1 ($1.95)	Malibu
11	X-Men Unlimited 4 ($3.95)	Marvel	36	Steel 2 ($1.50)	DC
12	Batman 505 ($1.50)	DC	37	Captain America 425 ($2.95)	Marvel
13	Adventures/Superman 510 ($1.50)	DC	38	'Breed 1 ($2.50)	Malibu
14	Superman Man of Steel 31 ($1.50)	DC	39	X-Men: Jean & Scott ($3.95)	Marvel
15	Action Comics 697 ($1.50)	DC	40	Ninjak 3 ($2.25)	Valiant
16	Detective Comics 672 ($1.50)	DC	41	Team Youngblood 5 ($1.95)	Image
17	Green Lantern 50 ($2.95)	DC	42	Hulk 415 ($1.25)	Marvel
18	Amazing Spider-Man 387 ($1.25)	Marvel	43	Prophet 5 ($1.95)	Image
19	Cyberforce 3 ($1.95)	Image	44	Catwoman 8 ($1.75)	DC
20	Maxx 7 ($1.95)	Image	45	Tales of the Jedi 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse
21	Excalibur 75 ($3.50)	Marvel	46	Simpsons Comics 2 ($2.25)	Bongo
22	Venom Enemy Within ($2.95)	Marvel	47	Robin 5 ($1.50)	DC
23	Superboy 2 ($1.50)	DC	48	Spect Spider-Man 210 ($1.25)	Marvel
24	Savage Dragon 8 ($1.95)	Image	49	Freak Force 2 ($1.95)	Marvel
25	Shadow of the Bat 25 ($1.75)	DC	50	Web of Spider-Man 110 ($1.25)	Marvel

Comics International Top 50: 01/94

WHILE the facing page's charts for the two major US distributors and their UK equivalents throw up interesting differences between buying trends in each country, in an attempt to overview the industry, **Comics International** is now producing its own top fifty chart.

Taking the order levels from each company and factoring in the size of each operation, we are able to produce a chart reflecting the entire month with far greater accuracy than those produced for the record, film or book industry.

As always, this represents the trade orders for titles — meaning retailers believe they can sell the books they are ordering. Whether consumers choose to buy them is a different matter. (Key: re = re-entry)

1	(2)	X-Men 30 ($1.95)	Marvel
2	(1)	Spawn 20 ($1.95)	Image
3	(=)	Uncanny X-Men 310 ($1.95)	Marvel
4	(16)	X-Factor 100 ($2.95)	Marvel
5	(new)	Beavis & Butt-Head 1 ($1.95)	Marvel
6	(17)	Wolverine 79 ($1.75)	Marvel
7	(15)	Gambit 4 ($2.00)	Marvel
8	(6)	Superman 87 ($1.50)	DC
9	(7)	X-Men 2099 #6 ($1.25)	Marvel
10	(re)	X-Men Unlimited 4 ($3.95)	Marvel
11	(8)	Adventures Superman 510 ($1.50)	DC
12	(16)	X-Force 32 ($1.25)	Marvel
13	(4)	Superman Man of Steel 31 ($1.50)	DC
14	(13)	Batman 505 ($1.50)	DC
15	(re)	Cyberforce 3 ($1.95)	Image
16	(12)	Action Comics 697 ($1.50)	DC
17	(19)	Detective Comics 672 ($1.50)	DC
18	(re)	Maxx 7 ($1.95)	Image
19	(50)	Green Lantern 50 ($2.95)	DC
20	(22)	Amazing Spider-Man 387 ($1.25)	Marvel
21	(new)	Excalibur 75 ($3.95)	Marvel
22	(5)	Superboy 2 ($1.50)	DC
23	(new)	Shadowman 0 ($3.50)	Valiant
24	(=)	Savage Dragon 8 ($1.95)	Image
25	(re)	Shadow of the Bat 25 ($1.75)	DC
26	(new)	Rune 1 ($1.95)	Malibu
27	(20)	Venom Enemy Within 2 ($2.95)	Marvel
28	(37)	Stormwatch 8 ($1.95)	Image
29	(36)	Cable 9 ($2.00)	Marvel
30	(14)	Supergirl 2 ($1.50)	DC
31	(25)	Spider-Man 2099 #17 ($1.25)	Marvel
32	(10)	Codename Strykeforce 3 ($1.95)	Image
33	(11)	Steel 2 ($1.50)	DC
34	(32)	Spider-Man 44 ($1.75)	Marvel
35	(34)	Team Youngblood 5 ($1.95)	Image
36	(35)	Prophet 5 ($1.95)	Image
37	(30)	Ninjak 3 ($2.25)	Valiant
38	(new)	Forceworks #1 ($2.95)	Marvel
39	(re)	Simpsons Comics 2 ($2.50)	Bongo
40	(49)	Incredible Hulk 415 ($1.25)	Marvel
41	(23)	Daredevil 326 ($1.25)	Marvel
42	(new)	Captain America 425 ($2.95)	Marvel
43	(33)	Catwoman 8 ($1.75)	DC
44	(27)	Freak Force 2 ($1.95)	Image
45	(43)	Tales of the Jedi 4 ($2.50)	Dark Horse
46	(new)	Ren & Stimpy 16 ($1.50)	Marvel
47	(new)	'Breed 1 ($2.50)	Malibu
47	(45)	Robin 5 ($1.50)	DC
49	(new)	X-Men: Many Loves/Scott & Jean ($3.95)	Marvel
50	(re)	Spectacular Spider-Man 210 ($1.25)	Marvel

Marvel Comics continues to regain its market share with a 6% increase on last month and a 44% domination of the chart.

Holding 8 of the top 10 for the first time since **Comics International** started these analyses. The **X-Men** family of titles are proving to be consistently popular with 7 titles featuring in the top 10. Most notably the reemergence of **Wolverine**, since his revamping in **Wolverine** 75. The character's title is up 11 places, without a gimmick in sight.

Beavis & Butt-Head, the popular MTV cartoon critics enter the chart at 5, placing very highly in the United States, but because of the lack of exposure in the UK, failed to make either of the British distributors top 50.

Other Marvel climbers include **The Incredible Hulk** which is regaining a similar following it had when Dale Keown drew the book. The inclusion of **Excalibur** and **Captain America** in the 50 indicates a resurgence of other mainstream titles. Albeit that both comics are celebrating special anniversary issues, but in the case of **Excalibur**, it is an indication that since it became an official X-book it is achieving the sort of sales originally hoped for.

Force Works 1 turns up in the top 50 at 38, a position which **Avengers West Coast** would have found difficult to achieve. However **Force Works** 2 will be unlikely to reach the top 50 next month.

In general, the majority of Marvel titles appear to have increased in position, with only four titles of the 22 in the chart losing ground on last month.

With the cartoon show being shown on BBC2 on Tuesdays at 6.25pm now, it was not surprising to see **Ren & Stimpy** entering the chart. Marvel's 19th placing book actually has only three non-mutant or Spider-Man related books ahead of it, one of which is another licensed property.

Image Comics continues to slip a further 4% drop in the fifty showing that perhaps retailer are reflecting a consumer disillusionment with the titles. UK retailers have indicated that apart from **Spawn**, they have major ordering problems with most Image titles.

It appears that one of the few Image books to be holding its own is, the "big-name-less", **Stormwatch** which after a hiccup last month has regained some ground. It outsells all Extreme Studios' books and is only beaten by **Spawn** 20, **Cyberforce** 3 (part two of a **WildC.A.T.S** crossover) and **Maxx** 7 (a **Pitt** crossover).

Codename: Strykeforce 3 had the dubious honour of being this months biggest faller. Plummeting a massive 22 places, only DC's **Steel**, could match the plunge.

Freak Force 2 has fallen to 44 and with three Image titles not making the top 50 (the first time all solicited Image titles haven't succeeded in placing), the trend indicates fewer entries next month. **Savage Dragon** continues to hold its own, proving that a regular monthly title, from one of Image's lesser lights, is appreciated and patronised more by the fans.

DC Comics remain constant with a 26% share, due to the continued success of the **Superman** line. However, **Superman** titles are down by an average of 5 places and it is an indication that the one-time domination of the fifty by the Man of Steel is over. Arguably, the related titles will be hard pressed to achieve a chart placing next month and it could be DC's loss which could help Image, or Valiant, regain their previous market share.

Green Lantern 50 proved to be the most popular non-Superman or Batman related title, leaping a massive 31 places to occupy a top 20 spot. One of the few times any character, not related to the Batman or Superman titles, has succeeded in doing so. It will be interesting to see how the revamped **Green Lantern** title will do from issue 51 onwards.

Batman: Shadow of the Bat 25 is a re-entry into the charts, despite the fact that it is a standard 25th issue, with no cover gimmick, extra story pages or increase in price.

Valiant drops once more to a 4% share of the chart, with only two titles managing to make the 50. **Ninjak** drops a further 7 places and the news that artist Joe Quesada, is leaving the art chores with issue 4 has arguably condemned the title to the lower ends of the chart.

Shadowman returns to the chart with issue 0, this places at 23, but we are unlikely to see the regular series achieving that position on previous performances.

Malibu Comics: The first issue of **Rune** has burgeoned into the top 50 at 26, a very auspicious debut for the Ultraverse title. **Archer & Armstrong** did the same thing for Valiant and Barry Windsor-Smith. **Breakthru** issue 1 is the 51st placing title this month, giving a strong indication that the Ultraverse is growing.

'Breed 1, is a hit for Jim Starlin and the new creator owned Bravura line of titles. Coming into the chart at 47, they give Malibu a 4% share of the chart, a continuing improvement.

Direct Market order charts for combined 1993 titles

Diamond Distributors Top 100 Titles of 1993

1	Action Comics 687 (D/S)	DC	51	Savage Dragon 1	Image
2	Adventures/Superman 501 (D/S)	DC	52	Wildstar 1	Image
3	Superman 78 (D/S)	DC	53	Union 1	Image
4	Superman Man of Steel 22 (D/S)	DC	54	Deathmate Yellow	Valiant
5	Adventures/Superman 500 (D/S)	DC	55	Deathmate Black	Image
6	Turok Dinosaur Hunter 1	Valiant	56	Venom 4	Marvel
7	Batman 500 (D/S)	DC	57	Deathmate Blue	Valiant
8	Darker Image 1	Image	58	Stormwatch 3	Image
9	Deathblow 1	Image	59	X-Factor 92	Marvel
10	Deathmate Prologue	Valiant	60	Spawn 13	Image
11	Stormwatch 1	Image	61	Spawn 14	Image
12	Maxx 1	Image	62	Maxx 2	Image
13	Spawn 11	Image	63	Plasm 1	Defiant
14	Uncanny X-Men 300	Marvel	64	Secret Weapons 1	Valiant
15	Spawn 8	Image	65	Wolverine 75	Marvel
16	Youngblood: Strikefile 1	Image	66	X-Men Unlimited 1	Marvel
17	Spawn 12	Image	67	Superman 77	DC
18	Cable 1	Marvel	68	X-Force 25	Marvel
19	Superman 82 (D/S)	DC	69	Spawn 16	Image
20	Spawn 10	Image	70	Spawn 7	Image
21	Amazing Spider-Man 375	Marvel	71	Superman Man of Steel 21	DC
22	Spider-Man Unlimited 1	Marvel	72	Venom: Funeral Pyre 1	Marvel
23	Cyberforce 4	Image	73	Cyberforce 0	Image
24	Magnus Robot Fighter 25	Valiant	74	Brigade 2	Image
25	Spawn 9	Image	75	Superman 79	DC
26	Adventures/Superman 500 (n/s)	DC	76	Superman Man of Steel 23	DC
27	Stormwatch 2	Image	77	Adventures/Superman 502	DC
28	X-Men 2099 #1	Marvel	78	Secret Defenders 1	Marvel
29	Tribe 1	Image	79	Action Comics 688	DC
30	Spectacular Spider-Man 200	Marvel	80	Shaman's Tears 1	Image
31	Pitt 1	Image	81	X-Men 26	Marvel
32	Adventures/Superman 505 (D/S)	DC	82	Bloodstrike 2	Image
33	Brigade 1	Image	83	X-Men 18	Marvel
34	Shadowhawk II #3	Image	84	Action Comics 689	DC
35	X-Men 25	Marvel	85	The Maxx 3	Image
36	WildC.A.T.s Trilogy 1	Image	86	Batman 497	DC
37	Shadowhawk II #1	Image	87	Youngblood Yearbook 1	Image
38	X-O Manowar 0	Valiant	88	Deathmate Epilogue	Image
39	Bloodstrike 1	Image	89	X-Men 19	Marvel
40	Brigade 4	Image	90	Venom 5	Marvel
41	Uncanny X-Men 304	Marvel	91	X-Men 24	Marvel
42	Web of Spider-Man 100	Marvel	92	Infinity Crusade 1	Marvel
43	Spawn 15	Image	93	Turok Dinosaur Hunter 2	Valiant
44	Venom 2	Marvel	94	Tribe 2	Axis
45	Venom 3	Marvel	95	Uncanny X-Men 308	Marvel
46	Rai & The Future Force 9	Valiant	96	Gambit 1	Marvel
47	Pitt 2	Image	97	X-Men 28	Marvel
48	Sabretooth 1	Marvel	98	Adventures/Superman 501 (n/s)	DC
49	Shadowhawk 3	Image	99	Uncanny X-Men 303	Marvel
50	1963 #1	Image	100	Action Comics 687	DC

Capital City Distribution Top 100 Titles 1993

1	Adventures/Superman 500 (D/S)	DC	51	Darker Image 4	Image
2	Action Comics 687 (D/S)	DC	52	Sabretooth 1	Marvel
3	Adventures/Superman 501 (D/S)	DC	53	Darker Image 2	Image
4	Superman 78 (D/S)	DC	54	Doom's IV 1	Image
5	Superman: Man of Steel 22 (D/S)	DC	55	Secret Defenders 1	Marvel
6	Turok: Dinosaur Hunter 1	Valiant	56	Adventures/Superman 500 (n/s)	DC
7	Batman 500 (D/S)	DC	57	Venom 3	Marvel
8	Deathblow 1	Image	58	Spectacular Spider-Man 200	Marvel
9	Maxx 1	Image	59	Venom 4	Marvel
10	Darker Image 1	Image	60	Deathmate Yellow	Valiant
11	Cable 1	Marvel	61	Wildstar 1	Image
12	Spawn 11	Image	62	Deathmate Blue	Valiant
13	Youngblood: Strikefile 1	Image	63	Web of Spider-Man 100	Marvel
14	Bloodstrike 1	Image	64	Pitt 4	Image
15	X-Men 2099 1	Marvel	65	X-Men 26	Marvel
16	Deathmate: Prologue	Valiant	66	Shaman's Tears 1	Image
17	Spawn 12	Image	67	Deathmate Red	Image
18	Superman 82 (D/S)	DC	68	1963 #1	Image
19	Stormwatch 1	Image	69	Deathmate Black	Image
20	Tribe 1	Image	70	X-Factor 92	Marvel
21	Uncanny X-Men 300	Marvel	71	X-Men Unlimited 1	Marvel
22	Spawn 10	Image	72	Amazing Spider-Man 378	Marvel
23	Amazing Spider-Man 375	Marvel	73	WildC.A.T.S Sourcebook	Image
24	Spawn 13	Image	74	Superman 77	DC
25	Brigade 1	Image	75	Youngblood: Strikefile 3	Image
26	Spawn 9	Image	76	Codename: Strykeforce 1	Image
27	Spider-Man Unlimited 1	Marvel	77	Tribe 2	Axis
28	Phantom Force 1	Image	78	Youngblood Yearbook	Image
29	Youngblood: Strikefile 2	Image	79	Wildstar 3	Image
30	Spawn 14	Image	80	Secret Weapons 1	Valiant
31	Magnus Robot Fighter 25	Valiant	81	Infinity Crusade 1	Marvel
32	Stormwatch 0	Image	82	Spawn 16	Image
33	Cyberforce 0	Image	83	Pitt 3	Image
34	Shadowhawk II 2	Image	84	Venom: Funeral Pyre 1	Marvel
35	WildC.A.T.S Trilogy 1	Image	85	Deathblow 3	Image
36	Shadowhawk II 1	Image	86	X-Force 25	Marvel
37	Adventures/Superman 505 (D/S)	DC	87	Superman: Man of Steel 21	DC
38	Stormwatch 2	Image	88	Bloodstrike 2	Image
39	Venom 2	Marvel	89	Brigade 2	Image
40	X-O Manowar 0	Valiant	90	Gambit 1	Marvel
41	Stormwatch 3	Image	91	Wolverine 75	Marvel
42	Rai & the Future Force 9	Valiant	92	Plasm 1	Defiant
43	Savage Dragon 1	Image	93	Deathmate Epilogue	Image
44	Uncanny X-Men 304	Marvel	94	X-Men 24	Marvel
45	Maxx 2	Image	95	Batman 498	DC
46	X-Men 25	Marvel	96	Venom 5	Marvel
47	Darker Image 3	Image	97	Hellstorm 1	Marvel
48	Deathblow 2	Image	98	Spawn 17	Image
49	Spawn 15	Image	99	X-Men 19	Marvel
50	Union 1	Image	100	Maxx 3	Image

*The above shows the 1993 top 100 titles ordered through leading US direct sales distributors, based on their order forms. As such, it includes titles that were later resolicited by publishers (eg. **Pitt #4**). Because of the distributors' different methods of operation, a few titles do not feature in both charts, as they were considered to be outside of 1993 (eg. **Spawn 7**). UK's Titan Distributors do not have the information for such a chart and First Choice Wholesale has not been in operation long enough, so no US-UK trends can be observed.*

*While the Diamond and Capital charts differ, DC's Reign of the Supermen series pushed all competition out of both top five spots, but **Batman 500** is the only other DC title common to both charts. Valiant's **Turok 1** appears at #6 in each, but could best be viewed as a own goal as many consider the overstocks to have led to Valiant's fall in the speculator market.*

Where two editions of the same comic exist they are noted D/S for Direct Sale edition and n/s for the lower-priced regular newsstand edition (generally without any enhancements).

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MARVEL

Alpha Flight 3, 4, 51-52, 55-59, 63-67, 120 (bagged) **Avengers** 350, Annual 10, 22, Index 2-6 **Avengers Spotlight** 1-4 **Cable** (mini) 1 (ongoing) 1, 2 **Captain America** 383, annual 12, **Sentinel of Liberty** 3, 4 **Daredevil** 180, 183, 184, 190, 203-205, 230, 233, 252 **Darkhawk** 25 Annual 1 **Doctor Strange** 50, Annual 3 **Excalibur** special 1, Mojo Mayhem **Fantastic Four** 232, 236, 286, 347, 348, Annual 17, 19-21 **Ghost Rider** 29, 31, 37, 40 **Groo** 60, 62, 67, 80 **Guardians of the Galaxy** 39 Annual 1 **Hawkeye** 1, 2 **Hulk** 318, 320, 327, 329, 355, 366 **Iceman** 2, 3 **Infinity War** 2 **Iron Man** 250 **Kitty Pryde & Wolverine** 1-3 **Marvel Comics Presents** 79-81, 83, 84 **Marvel Fanfare** 18, 19 **Marvel Secret Wars** 4-7 **MSWII** 8 **Marvel Universe** 6, 7 **Moon Knight** 50 **Namor** 37 Annual 1 **Offcastes** 1 **Punisher POV** 1-3 **Punisher War Journal** 16-18, 50 **Back to School** 1 **Punisher 2099** #1 **Ravage 2099** #1 **She-Hulk** 50 **Silver Surfer/Warlock: Resurrection** 1-4 **Silver Surfer** (Moebius) 2 Annual 4 **Spider-Man** 24, 27-30, 32-34 **Spider-Man 2099** #4, 9 **Spectacular Spider-Man** 200 Annual 13 **Spirits of Vengeance** 12, 14 **Stray Toasters** 4 **Thor** 338, 339, 411, 412, 450 Annual 7-11, 18 **Tales of Asgard** 1 **Venom: Lethal Protector** 2 **Web of Spider-Man** 90 (hologram) Annual 9 **West Coast Avengers** (mini) 3, 4 **Wolverine** 53, 55-58, 66, 69, 71, 72 Saga 1-4 **X-Factor** 10, 15, 85 **X-Force** 16 **Uncanny X-Men** 300 Annual 11-13 **X-Men v Avengers** 1, 2, 4 **X-Men** 1(e) **X-Men 2099** #1 **X-Men v Micronauts** 1

EPIC

Epic 1, 2, 3 **Clive Barker's Hellraiser** 2, 5, 6,10-13, 15-17, 20 **Book of the Damned** II, III

IMAGE/VALIANT/DEFIANT

Bloodstrike 1 **Cyberforce** 4 **Deathblow** 1 **Deathmate Prologue Hard Corps** 2-5, 9 **Magnus** 25 **Rai** 10-12 **Savage Dragon** 3 **Shadowhawk** II 2, 3 **Shadowman** 10-19 **Supreme** 1 **Tribe** 1 **Union** 1 **Warriors of Plasm** 1-3 **WildC.A.T.S** 1, 4

MISCELLANEOUS

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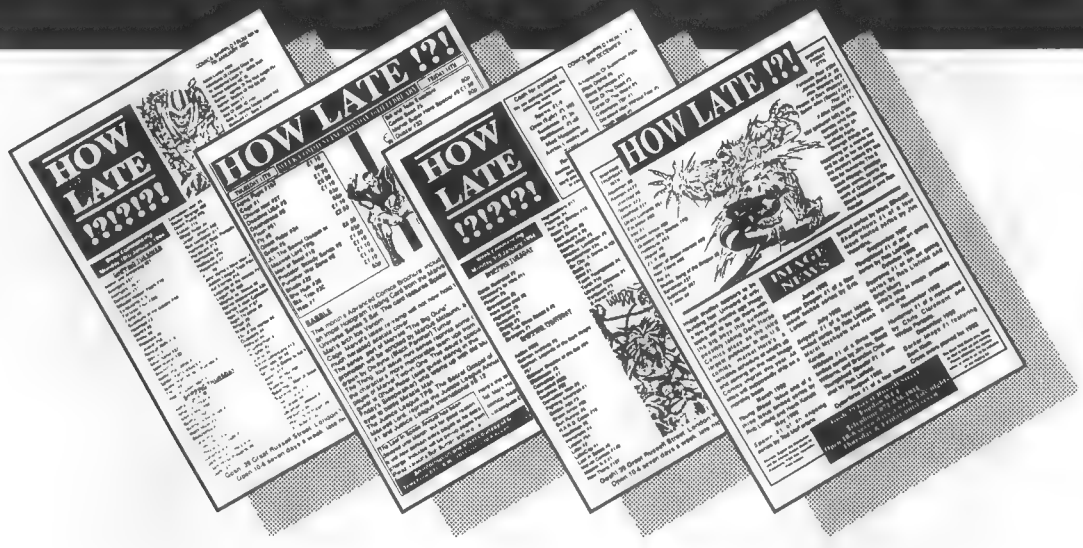

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mEDIAFILE

Associate editor Sarah Bolesworth looks at recent media coverage of comics and related product

BBC Television scored a major coup with the transmission this month of a recent purchase, the *Lois & Clark* live action series, made for the ABC network by Time Warner, DC's parent company.

The series — ignored for the most part by the media in this country — began on Saturday 8 January at 7.00pm on BBC1. But presumably because they didn't think that a UK audience would relate to *Lois & Clark* as a part of the title, the BBC is using only the sub-title, *The New Adventures of Superman*. Which does leave you wondering how many other *Clarks* there *are* in popular fiction, let alone how many Loises. As for Lois and Clark together...

Controller of BBC 1 and a popular culture specialist Alan Yentob must have had the decision made for him.

Lois & Clark is quite obviously made with adult sensibilities in mind. Of course, the whole series is a tribute to the kitsch elements in comics culture and suspension of disbelief is taken as read. But the script-writing contains subtleties of dialogue and character only meaningful to an adult audience. Sex, although non-explicit, is also a fairly prominent and consistent theme.

So what did the BBC schedule-planners do? They moved the next episode to 5.30pm, planting it firmly in kids' programmes territory.

It's possible that a culturally-deprived manager decided that it must belong in the kid's timeslot — an error not easily made if they had used the American title or had viewed any of the series.

Or some ratings-desperate exec thought it wouldn't perform against whatever ITV was showing at 7.00pm (*Barrymore*). And there was the all-important repeat run of *Birds of a Feather*, which began on the same night as the second episode of *The New Adventures of Superman* went out.

Of course, it is a complex and difficult task to schedule TV programmes. *Birds of a Feather* is a proved ratings-puller, even when repeated. *The New Adventures of Superman* was, in the UK, an unknown quantity. But it's interesting to note that in the States, ABC have recommissioned *Lois & Clark* as an ongoing series and moved Spielberg's derivative but high-rating *seaQuest* from its peaktime slot, replacing it with the increasingly adult-oriented Superman drama series.

It's also noticeable that, despite a seeming lack of confidence in *The New Adventures of Superman*'s potential, the BBC's **Radio Times**' picture desk liked the series well enough to commission a Superman visual from Brian Bolland for the *At a Glance* section, along with featuring the series' stills in two out of three consecutive editions.

That said, the amusingly-named VAT (value-added team) writers working on the **Radio Times**' programme listings pages had obviously not appreciated the true nature of the Superman series.

"Clark Kent's a regular guy who, every once in a while, flies through the air with his underpants outside his pants," commented the billing (8.1.94). Really? We never realised. And the writers never did either, until **Guardian** cartoonist Steve Bell characterised the PM thus.

The relationship between Lois and Clark is described as "a two-person triangle that hinges [sic] on the scarcely credible premise that Lois fails to recognise Superman as her colleague because he's taken off his glasses".

And there was I, thinking that the **Radio Times** is a thinking person's magazine. Lois's legendary non-recognition of Clark is one of the *fundamentals* of the superhero genre; it is a convention of the comics medium that superheroes in costume aren't recognised. But try telling that to the VAT-man — and he'll tell you that he isn't an ignorant, pompous, self-regarding hack.

Settle-down? it's a rout!

Industry professionals were unsurprised by the news this month that Marvel Comics is pulling in its horns and that three independents are going bust (see cover story, this issue).

Yes, indeed. Why *did* the biggest publisher in the comics industry imagine itself immune from the post-blowout hangover?

The answer (barely heard amid the screams of corporate editors throwing themselves on swords, out of tenement windows, etc.) lies in the systematic rape of the publisher's assets and the over-exploitation of creators. In other words, it lies in greed.

The majority of professionals acknowledge only too readily that the price of over-expansion would have to be paid. Boom is followed by bust, as surely as night is by day.

Marvel Comics has over recent years been behaving as if the recession were a figment of the collective imagination. But because it's the biggest publisher in the business, others have been forced to compete with the huge increase of product churned out by the company since it was brought by Ronald O Perelman.

A case could be made (admittedly only by a market research agency) for creators' rights throwing production-to-profit ratios out of whack.

But Marvel had to grow or die; the company had been bought by a corporate raider who'd strapped a multi-million dollar debt to its back; a bomb waiting to go off.

The status quo at Marvel when Perelman bought the company was such that it had a limited number of creators to produce existing titles. With legions of fully-fledged creators failing to materialise from Smallsville USA, Marvel had to make do with what it had.

A sure sign of increasing desperation among the Marvel marketing team came with the pushing of the so-called value-added product: bagged, die-cut, plasticised, foil embossed covers, free trading card and pop-up-and-shag-you formats.

Marvel gyrated this way and that, flirting with seemingly new commercial opportunities as well as all the old collector traps, obviously manipulative crossovers, multi-title concepts and mini-universes abounded.

But these, after the initial flurry of interest, merely antagonised Marvel's core readership because of the massive price premiums — up to 100% hikes in some cases. And the hoped-for influx of new readers failed to happen — again because of the unique nature of the comics industry.

It may be apparent to Perelman by now that comics, because they involve intellectual property, cannot be produced like lipsticks (Revlon cosmetics being one of his raft of companies).

Increased production without commensurate sales equates with debt, retailer truculence and the creators' exhausted demoralisation. So what next for Marvel?

If Perelman is prepared to allow it, Marvel Comics will be supported by its parent Marvel Entertainment in the short term. But that is assuming that Marvel's TV and film marketing continues to be as successful as it currently appears to be. And it also assumes that Perelman is prepared to afford the publishing arm a period of retrenchment and recovery.

It has to be said that the industry could not have reached such a parlous state without the complicity of the other big players in the industry — the distributors. That, however, is another story, and can be saved for the next time we're all sitting uncomfortably.

Games people don't play...

A factor key to the continued health of Marvel is games revenue. Profit warnings by major comics licensees and advertisers Sega and Nintendo point to a 20% shrinkage in gross revenue during 1994-95, according to a report in the **Observer** this month (16.1.94).

Sega, who dominates the European games market, has seen a 100% increase in its revenue every year since 1991. In addition, both companies have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for their pricing policies in the UK. Like CDs, games in the UK are expensive when compared with their US retail prices.

Sega — whose strongest market is in Europe — is seen as being most at risk, although Nintendo is suffering from a consumer return to buying more music and traditional games in the US.

A reduction in revenues is surely inevitable for comics companies as a result. That, combined with the equally certain fall in TV and film licensing income means that both DC and Marvel may well suffer shrinkages. But Time Warner is the biggest entertainment group in the world, with much deeper pockets than Perelman.

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RANSON NOTES

A monthly column in which leading comics artist Arthur Ranson examines the social impact, artistic content and foibles of contemporary comics and their creators.

THERE EXISTS a Jules Feiffer cartoon which shows a guy who lists his possessions, pauses, then says "It's a full life, Charlie."

In the Sixties when the cartoon was published and I was a child, I may not have been able to define what a full life was, but even then I knew it wasn't consumer durables and other such superficialities, which we couldn't afford anyway. But if we could have, we would still have known what was *really* important. A sound value system rather than a sound system.

Having established that I'm not impressed by crass materialism, surface and glitter, if I now tell you I put on a black suit and bow tie and went to an Edwardian hotel (once the love nest of Lily Langtry) for a book launch party, you will appreciate that I wasn't taken in by the glamour of it all. No sucker yourself, you won't be very impressed either.

The publication being celebrated was Knockabout's **Cassanova's Last Stand**, about which I say nothing. If the idea gets round that chicken sandwiches and white wine induce admiring mentions, my honour will count for nought in the bazaars of Marakesh. Now if I'd won the raffle...

The (admiring adjective omitted) Sarah Bolesworth was there. As Sarah edits my column I introduced myself and asked her, a *real* journalist, for her views on my writing. Unfortunately, Sarah is too busy to give English lessons, but did suggest that I paid syntax, more attention, and should get to my main point more directly. So here goes...

All the management in British comics is crap.

Ha, ha! Only joking. What an outrageous, totally untrue naughty declaration that is.

Then pray tell the court, Mr Ranson, what prompted you to make such a defamatory statement?

Well, your honour, it's the Americans wot is to blame. As an impressionable youth, when DC Comics in the shape of Archie Goodwin slipped me a script and contract to draw a Batman story, I accepted without thought of the consequences. So they supplied board and paid postage costs, I could take it or leave it. True, every time I sent artwork, busy Archie phoned from New York to acknowledge receipt and say something comforting. His assistant editor, Bill Kaplan, gave the impression he was at my beck and call with help and advice, but I wasn't dependent.

Then DC began sending a monthly newsletter published to keep freelancers in touch, and recently, the multi-media empire Warner Bros., who own DC, sent me their Christmas catalogue. I should have realised I was lost, when I found I was deliberately looking for American companies. Kitchen Sink Press wanted to publish **Buttonman** as a graphic novel and sent me a contract. Urged on by John Wagner I phoned and told them those parts of it we didn't like much.

"What would you like?" they murmured. "This, this and this," I ventured. "Okay," they replied. "It's done."

It was then, your honour, while kicking myself for not asking for more, that the treacherous idea came to me that management in Britain wasn't necessarily the best in the world.

I can't speak about *all* British comic management. ITV Publications (owners of **TV Times** and **Look-In**, when I worked for them), IPC, Fleetway and Toxic (about my relationship with whom, my lawyer advises me, the least said the better) are the only ones I've done stretches with.

Neither is it my intention to gratify your tacky taste for gossip. The faults in the relationship between publishers and free-lancers is cultural rather than personal.

Steve McManus at Fleetway, and I've spoken to him on this very subject, is a decent fellow and no doubt as kind to animals and as helpful to old ladies as is Archie Goodwin. Most editors, art editors and what not, are recognisably human too. Never-the-less, or perhaps, sometimes-the-less -- let's not be absolutist about this, American companies seem to be institutionally set up to keep their contributors happy in a way British ones are not.

"Is that nasty British management not nice to diddums then?"

It's not that, your honour, not quite. Artists, even (or perhaps particularly) the more successful ones, are an insecure lot, sensitive souls. If their work generates zillions of pounds they would like their share, but what they really want is respect. Is it too fanciful to suggest that even the money is really only a symbol of the love they seek? One editor famously told his staff "never compliment an artist, he will only ask for more money."

The opposite seems nearer to the truth. A warm relationship can be as influential as cold cash. Cash helps, of course. An art buyer once bragged to me that he always paid as little as possible regardless of his budget. On the other hand DC Comics, I'm told, paid a cover artist who has no entitlement to royalties, a few thousand greenbacks ex gratia. All because they wanted him to share in the success of a particularly well selling title.

Hands up any British publisher who thinks that is a good idea. The fees, royalties and reprint payments should be structured to give a fair percentage of profits and reflect the value of individual writers and artists (Hear, hear!).

This should be an integral part of the publisher- contributor partnership, not embarrassed haggling when the creator has it dawn on him that his contribution is helping fill company coffers. If my work is being published in four languages who is making money if I am not? Is that a hypothetical question?

In conjunction with the financial relationship should go a personal one. DC's newsletter is always saying that freelancers are valued members of the team, and DC staff act as though they believe that. A budget for hospitality but also care in the treatment of the *valued members*. There is a message for UK comics in that cloud of dust rising from the feet of British creators stampeding to America.

It's not all bad in Britain. There are exceptions, many, perhaps, individual acts and efforts.

Ask any artist ever commissioned by Sue Lamb when art editor of **Look-In** for instance. Singled out because: she no longer has the job, will probably never read this, to encourage by example, and two, it highlights the problem. Sue isn't the only art editor to be enthusiastic, get the best deal possible, or buy lunch for an artist, but these life enhancing extras were *despite* IPC's policy at the time, contradicting management's general approach.

As a result some exceptional artists, worth thrice the money, were happy to work for her. An art editor defending a freelance against management is nice, but, but-but-but, how much much better if that defending wasn't necessary.

To all other commissioners of my work who have been good to me, my grateful acknowledgment. I love you also. And I'm not in the bridge burning business. This isn't about me anyway. It is a loss to British comics that so many creators feel happier working abroad. Glenn Fabry is doing a job for Fleetway at present. I hope they are carrying him to work on velvet cushions, peeling his grapes, and warming his breakfast croissants.

__Arthur Ranson__ is one of the UK's top comics artists. In the 1970s, he started work at __Look-In__ and for many years drew a wide range of TV and pop-related strips. It is a mark of his versatility that, having won popular and critical acclaim for Danger Mouse, he went on to achieve the same with Judge Anderson: Psi Division for __2000AD__ and his first US work, __Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight - Tao__. His __Buttonman__ graphic novel is published this month in Germany.

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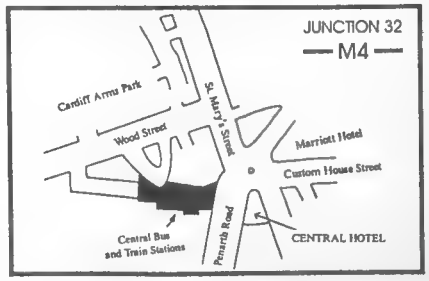

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FUTURE DATES: (Saturdays in 1994) APR 30 / JUNE 25 / SEPT 3

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COMING COMICS

The following titles are scheduled for publication in February/March but, as always, delays can occur. If you are in doubt about the current situation of any titles, please don't hesitate to call our mail order hotline.

MARVEL COMICS

Married at last, Scott & Jean going on a time-travelling honeymoon!
The Adventures of Cyclops & Phoenix
#1 (of 4) [£2.20] £2.00
The latest newcomer to the 2099 universe is...
Ghost Rider 2099
#1 (collector's edition) [£1.70] £1.55
#1 (newsstand edition) [£1.10] £1.00
The definitive origin of the man from S.H.I.E.L.D. and the agency he heads!
Fury #1 (o/s) [£2.20] £2.00
*From out of the pages of **Web of Spider-Man**...*
Nightwatch
#1 (collector's edition) [£1.85] £1.65
#1 (newsstand edition) [£0.95] £0.85
The one-time member of Alpha Flight in his first mini series:
Northstar #1 (of 4) [£1.30] £1.15
With a title like this, who needs an introduction?
The Official Index to the X-Men #1, 2 (of 5) [£1.50] £1.35
Frank Castle's final journey to the 'Nam:
The Punisher in the 'Nam:
Final Invasion (o/s) [£4.95] £4.45
Reprinting the X-Men hero/villain's earliest appearances...
Sabretooth Classics #1 [£1.10] £1.00
Spider-Man/X-Factor: Shadowgates #1 (of 3) [£1.50] £1.35
The latest mini series for another of Marvel's villains turned "hero"...
Venom: The Mace #1 (of 3) [£2.20] £2.00
*Once he stood in for **Iron Man** now he is...*
War Machine
#1 (ashcan edition) [£0.60] £0.55
#1 (collector's edition) [£2.20] £2.00
#1 (newsstand edition) [£1.55] £1.40
#2 [£1.10] £1.00
*Reprinting the original **X-Men** stories starting with issue 1 (naturally!).*
X-Men: The Early Years #1 [£1.10] £1.00

It was a sleeper hit. Now it's available in one book!
Daredevil: Fall from Grace tpb [£13.95] £12.55
The mini series now in one book...
Deadly Foes of Spider-Man tpb [£8.95] £8.05
*The complete story from **Marvel Comics Presents** #72-84 now available in an affordable format:*
Wolverine: Weapon X tpb [£8.95] £8.05

EPIC COMICS

Hellraiser Spring Slaughter: Razing Hell (o/s) [£5.20] £4.70

*Reprinting **Groo the Wanderer** #25-28*
Groo the Wanderer: Garden tpb [£7.95] £7.15

MARVEL U.K. COMICS

Dark Guard Gold: Old Friends [£2.20] £2.00
Killfrenzy #1 (of 4) [£1.50] £1.35
Motormouth: Re-Mix #1 (of 4) [£1.50] £1.35

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All the prices on this listed have been discounted by 10% for pre-payment; prices shown in square brackets [] are the original prices. Through our Advance Order Service, we offer discounts of up to 30%. For details and a copy of our regular monthly list featuring more than 300 titles (including science fiction/horror/fantasy movie & TV related books and magazines), please write or call our mail order hotline.

DC COMICS

A new DC hero makes his debut...
Damage #1, 2 [£1.30] £1.15
*From out of **Bloodbath** comes...*
Gunfire #1 [£1.30] £1.15
More mayhem from Alan Grant and company!
Lobo: A Contract on Gawd #1 (of 4) [£1.30] £1.15
At last, in his own ongoing series...
The Ray
#1 (collector's edition) [£2.20] £2.00
#1 (newsstand edition) [£1.30] £1.15

*DC's 1994 annuals all feature journies into other possibilities known as **Elseworlds**.*
Catwoman Annual #1 [£2.20] £2.00
Legion of Super-Heroes Annual #5 [£2.60] £2.35
Superman: The Man of Steel Annual #3 [£2.20] £2.00
Team Titans Annual #2 [£2.60] £2.35

*A collection of some of the best short story arcs from **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight**. Includes* Blades, Legends of the Dark Mite *and* Hothouse.
Batman: The Collected
Legends of the Dark Knight tpb [£8.95] £8.05
The mini series that introduced the new Ray and brought artist Joe Quesada the attention he deserves now in one book:
The Ray: In a Blaze of Power tpb [£6.95] £6.25

DC/VERTIGO

*First there was **The Books of Magic** mini series, then the **Arcana Annual** #1. Now the young mage, Tim Hunter gets an ongoing series to call his own.*
The Books of Magic #1 [£1.50] £1.35

A new hardcover graphic novel, written by Grant Morrison with art by Jon J. Muth.
The Mystery Play [£13.95] £12.55
*Originally presented in **Revolver**, Pete Milligan & Brendan McCarthy's exquiste tale is now available in one edition*
Rogan Gosh gn [£4.95] £4.45

BRAVURA

Super-heroes the Howard Chaykin way!
Power & Glory #1, 2 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65

DARK HORSE COMICS

Masamune Shirow's acclaimed cyberpunk epic is back!
Appleseed Databook #1 (of 2) [£2.60] £2.35
Atlas #1 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65
The popular Japanese cyberpunk anime series is now an English language manga-style epic. At last!
Bubblegum Crisis: Grand Mal #1 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65
*The first spin-off from **Comics' Greatest World: Golden City**...*
Catalyst: Agents of Change #1, 2 [£1.55] £1.40
Dominion Special:
Phantom of the Audience (o/s) [£1.85] £1.65
Grendel Tales:
The Devil's Hammer #1, 2 (of 3) [£2.20] £2.00
Hellhounds
#1 [£1.85] £1.65
#2 [£2.20] £2.00
Indiana Jones
and The Arms of Gold #1, 2 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65
Joe R. Lansdale's By Bizarre Hands #1 [£1.85] £1.65
*From out of **Comics' Greatest World: Steel Harbor** comes...*
Motorhead Special #1 (o/s) [£2.95] £2.65
Outlanders: Epilogue (o/s) [£1.85] £1.65
Rack & Pain #1, 2 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65

[Andrew Vachss'] Hard Looks tpb #1 [£10.50] £9.45
Outlanders tpb #3 [£8.95] £8.05

DARK HORSE/LEGEND

The latest from John Byrne...
Danger Unlimited #1, 2 (of 4) [£1.55] £1.40
*Mike Mignola presents the World's greatest paranormal detective. (Also includes chapter 1 of Art Adams' **Monkeyman & O'Brien**).*
Hellboy #1 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65

DEFIANT

Originally produced for the Philadelphia Comicfest but now updated and available to the general public!
Defiant: The Origin of the Universe (o/s) [£1.10] £1.00
The debut of Earth's superheroic champion!
Charlemagne #1 [£2.40] £2.15
From Alan Weiss comes the centrepiece title of the Defiant Universe.
War Dancer #1, 2 [£1.85] £1.65

*Reprinting **Warriors of Plasm** #1-4 plus **Plasm** #0 and the **Splatterball** story included with the **Plasm** #0 trading card album...*
Warriors of Plasm tpb [£6.95] £6.25

Jim Shooter's Defiant Universe Collection Trading Cards - *includes first appearances of characters from forthcoming Defiant series like **Mongrel**, **Glory**, **War Dancer**, **Charlemagne**, **Dogs of War** and **Prudence & Caution**).*
Box (36 packs) [£48.95] £43.95
Pack (8 cards) [£1.35] £1.20
Set (99 cards excluding "chase" cards) - **please enquire**
"Chase" cards - **please enquire**
Album (includes bonus full-size reproductions of the covers to *Warriors of Plasm* #1, *Dark Dominion* #1, *The Good Guys* #1 & *War Dancer* #1) [£14.25] £12.75

GENESIS WEST

*Jack Kirby's **Phantom Force** was originally published by Image. Want more? Then you need to read...*
Phantom Force #0 [£1.85] £1.65

IMAGE

Gen 13 #1, 2 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65
Kindred #1 [£1.85] £1.65
The Pact #1 [£1.50] £1.35

If this isn't the team-up/crossover of '94 we'll eat our hats (or something)! Written by Frank Miller, art by Tod McFarlane - what more needs saying?
Spawn/Batman Crossover (o/s) [£2.95] £2.65
plus from DC - written by Doug Moench, Chuck Dixon & Alan Grant with art by Klaus Janson...
Batman/Spawn: War Devil (o/s) [£3.70] £3.35
Both books for only... £5.75

MALIBU

Based on the hit anime series...
Project A-Ko #1, 2 [£2.20] £2.00

OVERSTREET PUBLICATIONS

The bible of the comics industry, now in its 24th year!
The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide #24
h/c [£14.95] £13.45
s/c [£10.95] £9.85

TOPPS

*The award-winning **Xenozoic Tales** is now a hit animated series and Topps have got the comic!*
Cadillacs & Dinosaurs
#1, 2 (of 3) (collector's edition) [£2.20] £2.00
#1, 2 (of 3) (newsstand edition) [£1.85] £1.65
Exosquad #1, 2 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65
*The **Jurassic Park** saga continues...*
Jurassic Park: Raptors Attack #1, 2 (of 4) [£1.85] £1.65

Universal Monsters Trading Cards
Box (36 packs) [£32.50] £29.25
Pack (8 cards) [£0.90] £0.80
Set (100 cards excluding "chase" cards) - **please enquire**
"Chase" cards - **please enquire**

ULTRAVERSE

Ultraverse II: Origins Trading Cards
Box (36 packs) [£36.75] £33.05
Pack (8 cards) [£1.00] £0.90
Set (90 cards excluding "chase" cards) - **please enquire**
"Chase" cards - **please enquire**

VALIANT

*Following their spectacular debut in **X-O Manowar**, it was only a matter of time before they got their own series!*
Armorines #1 [£1.70] £1.55

*The origin of the Man of the Atom collected from **Solar, Man of the Atom** #1-10.*
Solar, Man of the Atom #0 tpb [£6.95] £6.25

VIZ COMICS

Lycanthrope Leo #1 (of 7) [£2.20] £2.00
Promise (o/s) [£4.50] £4.05

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9.00am to 5.00pm Saturday

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Key to abbreviations used:

1 & 2 + 3	=	*Writer & penciller + inker*
sqbd	=	*perfect bound; squared spine; without staples*
b&w	=	*black & white content*
pc	=	*part-colour content*
hdk	=	*hardback (book) edition*
tpbk	=	*trade paperback, squarebound, comic size*
Xpg	=	*number of interior pages*

V = violence; N = nudity; S = sex

All comics are 32 page colour titles unless stated otherwise

SHIPPING: FEB-MAR '94

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

☐ **Cerebus 178** (Sim & Gerhard) *Mothers and Daughters Book Three — Reads, Part 5.* The earth-pig's examination of the true nature of women continues. b&w $2.25

AC COMICS

☐ **Femforce 70** (Black & Barras + Northey) Nightveil runs into danger on a Pacific Island inhabited by prehistoric lifeforms. $2.95

☐ **Good Girl Art Quarterly** (Heike & Allen) The Femforce team's alien beauty Stardust takes centre stage after deciding that she needs humanisation. 52pg $2.95

BONGO COMICS

☐ **Itchy & Scratchy Comics 2** (Castellaneta + Lacusta & Vance + Morrison) An in-production look at the making of *Itchy & Scratchy* — the movie. $1.95

☐ **Radioactive Man #88** (#2) (Groening & Vance + Morrison) The action leaps forward to the early 1960s, and the subsequent introduction of Fallout Boy. .. $1.95

CALIBER PRESS

☐ **Black Mist 2** (Pruett & Khahaifa) Black Mist barely manages to hang onto his sanity as the temptation of the power of the Mist grows ever greater. b&w $2.95

☐ **Deadworld 8** (Thayer & Torres + Showman) King Zombie finally achieves a much-desired goal when he manages to seize control of Deadworld. b&w $2.95

☐ **Negative Burn: An Anthology 8** (various) Caliber Press's collected creators' title, featuring *Mr Mamoulian* (Bolland); Phil Hestor's *Boneshaker* and *Classics Desecrated* (Wheeler). b&w $2.95

COMICO

☐ **Saker: The Lost Texts 2** (of 2; Herman & various) Concluding part of this story about Jesus Christ performing a resurrection. $3.50

CONTINUITY

☐ **Armor 11 (1993)** (Stone & Velluto) The Scarlet Streak's past is revealed. $2.50

☐ **Cyberrad Volume 2 #2** (Stone & Adams + Bennett) Resolicited issue pre-dating all of Continuity's summer and autumn crossovers. $2.95

☐ **Earth 4 Volume 3 #8** (Stone & Coates) Earth 4 are recruited to find an undetectable stealth bomber threatening global peace. ... $2.50

☐ **Knighthawk, the Protector 2** (Adams) The fate of Knighthawk's twin brother is revealed. And the eponymous hero suspects that someone may be trying to muscle in on his patch. $2.50

☐ **Megalith 11 (1993)** (Shooter + Stone & various) Jim Shooter contributes a script as Megalith searches for his parents — and falls in love with a god's wife. $3.00

NEW ☐ **Megalith Graphic Novel 2** (Adams + Redondo) Reprinting issues 3 and 4 of the ongoing title. 48pg. ... $3.95

☐ **Ms Mystic Volume 3 #8** (Stone & Barry) Revelations about Ms Mystic throw a very different light on her life thus far. $2.50

☐ **Shaman Graphic Novel** (Stone & Adams + Nebres) Origin issue.$3.95

☐ **Rise of Magic Special: The Closing of the Eye** (Stone & Adams) *Rise of Magic* epilogue. The final part of the crossover sees the evil of Magic triumph. £3.95

☐ **Valeria, the She-Bat 1** (Adams) Originally available only as a retailer incentive comic, this title is now selling as a limited print run consumer edition. 28pg ... $10.00

DARK HORSE

NEW ☐ **Atlas 1** (of 4; Zick) The golden giant falls to Earth in the 20th Century — and inadvertently brings a battle of the gods to New York City. $2.50

NEW ☐ **Caravan Kidd Valentine's Day Special 1** (Manabe) Mian is increasingly attracted to Wataru, and beginning to have second thoughts about her mission. b&w $2.50

☐ **Dark Horse Presents 82** (anthology) Featuring: *Buoy 77* (Boyd & Lopez); *Hermes v the Eyeball Kid* (Campbell) and *The Legion of Justice* (Itner). b&w $2.25

NEW ☐ **Nina's New Improved All-Time Greatest Collectors' Item Classic Comics 1** (Nina Paley) One-shot focusing on Valentine's day from the Paley perspective. Mature readers. $2.50

☐ **Out of the Vortex 5** (Barrett & McDonnell & Magyar) The Vortex alien takes his battle with the two destroyers into the relative safety of outer space. $2.00

☐ **Robocop: Roulette 2** (of 4; Arcudi & Byrd + Garvey) Robocop finds that the Taxman can be a more formidable foe than any other he has formerly faced. $2.50

☐ **The Thing From Another World: Eternal Vows 3** (of 4; deVries & Gulacy + Davis) MacReady wants to torch the entire town of Wallace Harbour, but the townsfolk are not too keen on *that*... ..... $2.50

☐ **Version 2.7** (Sakaguchi) Hap and Eiko meet with Shiro, one of the developers of the Black Echo chip. They hope he will help — but all he's interested in is showing the heroes new powers he's developed. $2.50

☐ **Age of Reptiles 4** (of 4; Delgado) The Deinonychus discover the place where all the giant dinosaurs go to die. Believing they have found bone-heaven, they discover bands of carrion dinosaurs, who are only too willing to share their feast. .. $2.50

NEW ☐ **Grendel Tales: The Devil's Hammer 1** (of 3; Walton & Mireault) Petrus Christus, the only survivor of a Grendel massacre, must become a Grendel to wreak his vengeance. Mature readers. $2.95

☐ **Aliens: Music of the Spears 2** (of 4; Williamson & Hamilton + Bradstreet) Damien fails to evoke more than a grunt from his captive Alien, so decides that it needs some bigger prey. $2.50

NEW ☐ **Indiana Jones and the Arms of Gold 1** (of 4; Marrs & Duranona) Indy travels to South America to find a priceless ancient treasure. Things seem relatively easy, but trouble isn't far behind. $2.50

NEW ☐ **Maximum Overload 1** (various) Magazine featuring popular video game characters. 64pg $3.95

☐ **Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi 5** (Veitch & Roach) The story of Nomi Sunrider continues, with Bogga the Hut in hot pursuit. $2.50

☐ **The Mark 3** (Barr & Rader) The Mark battles the Archon to a standstill on a theatre stage, while Lisle helps the Archon's wife escape her partner's plotting. $2.50

NEW ☐ **Catalyst: Agents of Change 1** (of 12; Campbell + Ford & Hamilton + Carr + Glines) Continuing the *Comics' Greatest World* theme, this series follows on from the **Out of the Vortex** 5 storyline. $2.50

NEW ☐ **Colors in Black 1** (anthology) New series from Spike Lee dealing with race and inter-racial relations. $2.95

NEW ☐ **Danger Unlimited 1** (of 4; Byrne + Webb) Mini-series chronicling the adventures of a superteam released from stasis after 75 years. $2.00

☐ **Dark Horse Comics 18** (anthology) Features *Alien* (Arcudi & Mendoza); *Star Wars: Droids* (Thorsland & Hughes); *Predator* (Moore & Gregory). $2.95

☐ **Enemy 3** (Grant & Schenck + Hendrix) FBI agents, Heller and Quillan help Enemy after he is almost killed by White Lightning. ... $2.50

NEW ☐ **Hellhounds 1** (Oshii & Fujiwara) First of an adventure series, introducing a new kind of criminal. The government strikes back with a new type of law enforcer. b&w $2.50

☐ **Predator: Bad Blood 3** (Dorkin & Thompson + Warner) While the CIA and ex-CIA task forces do battle over the yet uncaptured rogue Predator, another Predator is sent to Earth to stop the AWOL mayhem. ... $2.50

☐ **The Shadow: In the Coils of Leviathan 3** (Kaluta & Goss + Gianni) The Leviathan has been named as a biblical fury that no ordinary man can stop; the Shadow takes up the challenge. $2.95

☐ **Classic Star Wars 17** (Goodwin & Williamson + Nunis) Han Solo spins through hyperspace trapped in a crippled Millennium Falcon. . $2.95

NEW ☐ **Rack & Pain 1** (of 4; Pulido + Jimenez & McKenna + Marrin) First of a series about a living weapon (Rack) and his barbaric partner (Pain). $2.50

☐ **Sin City: A Dame to Kill For 4** (Miller) Dwight has 'killed Ava's husband and is now on the run. Mature readers. $2.95

☐ **X 2** (Grant & Mahnke + Palmiotti) X has gained a reputation as an assassin who kills for a reason. The copycat killer is using X's methods — which makes him furious. $2.00

DC COMICS

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 8TH

☐ **Batman 506** (Moench & Manley + Rubinstein) *Knightquest: The Crusade* continues. Batman finds himself having to fight a trio of ruthless killers, intent on taking the ruthless Abattoir out. $1.50

☐ **Black Orchid 8** (Vertigo; Foreman & Guay + Woch) After the death of her friend, Black Orchid goes on a quest to discover her inner self$1.95

☐ **Chain Gang War 10** (J Wagner & Duranona) Chain Gang are joined by

Batman & Deathstroke as they attack the Crooked Man's mansion. $1.75

☐ **Deathstroke, the Terminator 35** (Wolfman & Pelle + Blyberg) Deathstroke, embittered by his recent round the world battles, takes his anger out on a gang of kid mercenaries. $1.75

☐ **Flash 89** (Waid & Wierango + Marzan Jr) Flash is put on trial for wilful negligence after a young woman is injured during one of his battles. $1.50

☐ **Eclipso 18** (Fleming & Newman + Kryssing) The final issue of the series features Bruce Gordon and the Justice League in the last battle with the god of vengeance. $1.50

☐ **Hardware 14** (Milestone; McDuffie & Cowan + Rollins) Curt Metcalfe finds he is just as deadly without his suit of armour, as he beats a horde of attackers. $1.50

☐ **Legionnaires 13** (T & M Bierbaum & Fosco) Cosmic Boy's fate is set as the Invisible Kid discovers what his teammates suffered at the hands of Kid Psycho. $1.50

☐ **Sandman Mystery Theatre 13** (Vertigo; M Wagner + Seagle & Davis) *The Vamp, Part 1* (of 4). A rich young socialite is found dead, completely drained of blood. The Sandman *may* hold the key... Mature readers $1.95

☐ **Shade, the Changing Man 46** (Vertigo; Milligan & G Dillon) Lenny leaves Shade and Kathy with a new-found friend. Shade consults Pandora's box and gets more than he bargained for. Mature readers $1.95

NEW ☐ **The Mystery Play** (hdbk; Morrison & Muth) The actor playing God in a play is killed — and the prime suspect is the man playing Satan... 80pg . $19.95

☐ **Star Trek 59** (Weinstein & Garzon) Chekov's girlfriend and Spock are captured by the crew of a hostile alien ship. $1.75

☐ **Superboy 3** (Kesel & Grummett + Hazlewood) Scavenger and Superboy fight to the death at the heart of a volcano. $1.50

☐ **Superman: The Man of Steel 32** (L Simonson & Bright + Janke) *Bizarro's World, Part 4* (of 5). Superman captures Bizarro, rescues Lois and then takes the deteriorating clone to Lexcorps for a confrontation. $1.50

☐ **Valor 18** (Waid & Doran) Valor is dead and the space-time continuum is unravelling. Only the Legionnaires can help, but they are overwhelmed by events. $1.50

☐ **Wonder Woman 85** (Loebs & Moder + Parks) Wonder Woman, fresh from her battle with Ares Buchanan, finds her friends made pawns in a deadly game. . . . $1.50

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 15TH

☐ **Batman: Shadow of the Bat 26** (Grant & Blevins) *Knightquest: The Crusade* continues. The Clayfaces are back and Batman must stop them — in the name of love. $1.75

☐ **The Demon 46** (Ennis & McCrea) Guest starring the crew of *The Haunted Tank*. Etrigan confronts an old Nazi general who resurrects dead soldiers to do his bidding. . . . $1.75

☐ **Green Lantern 51** (Marz & Banks + Tanghal) Mongul escapes his prison and determines that Green Lantern — any of the team — will pay for his defeat. $1.50

☐ **Hawkman 8** (Kupperberg & McDonnell + Villagran) Hawkman battles Mongrel, one of the New Blood heroes, for control of the metahumans of Netherworld. $1.75

☐ **Hellblazer 76** (Vertigo; Ennis & S Dillon) Constantine prepares for his final confrontation with the First of the Fallen by visiting an old, long-dead friend in Ireland. $1.95

☐ **Icon 12** (Milestone; McDuffie & Bright + Gustovich) Icon and Rocket are embarrassed by the return of a 1970s mercenary, Buck Wild. $1.50

☐ **Justice League America 87** (Vado & Campos + Branch) *Cults of the Machine, Part 2* (of 3). The cult makes itself responsible for the return of the League's deadliest foe, the Dreamslayer. $1.50

☐ **Kid Eternity 12** (Vertigo; Nocenti & Phillips) The Kid attempts to cope with the effects of the mind-expanding drug — Slap — to help its victims. Mature readers. $1.95

☐ **The Legion of Super-Heroes 56** (McCraw & Immonen + Boyd) The *underground* Legion has its cover blown during a gang fight. . . $1.75

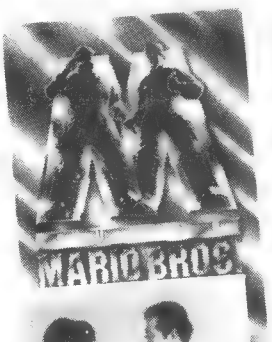
NEW ☐ **Lobo: A Contract on Gawd 1** (of 4; Grant & Dwyer + Janson) The "Main Man" is hired to eliminate an omnipotent being. Mature readers. $1.75

☐ **The New Titans 110** (Wolfman & Jaaska) Sarge Steel and the Flash guest as the heroes set off in search of a new headquarters. $1.75

☐ **S.T.A.R. Corps 6** (of 6; Vado & Felchle + Machlan) The five superhumans unite for the first time to fight the rogue computer — their own creator. $1.50

☐ **Supergirl 3** (Stern & Brigman + Guice) Supergirl learns the depth of Luthor's betrayal of her innocence and begins a bizarre transformation to strike back at him. $1.50

☐ **Superman 88** (Jurgens + Immonen & Rubinstein) *Bizarro's World, Part 5* (of 5). Lex Luthor discovers that the degenerative process affecting Bizarro is linked to his own system. Superman begins to mutate and grow. $1.50



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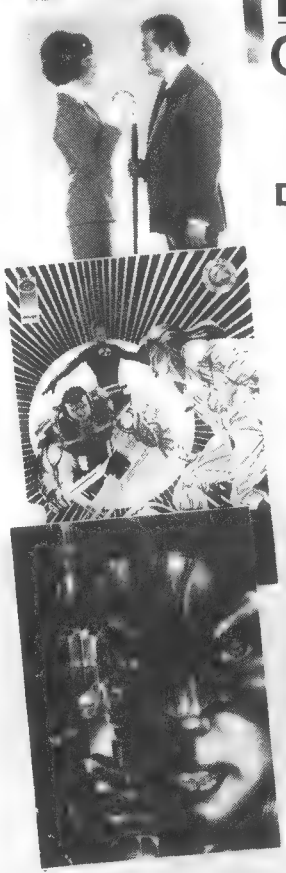

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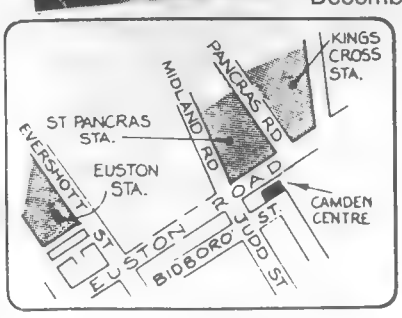

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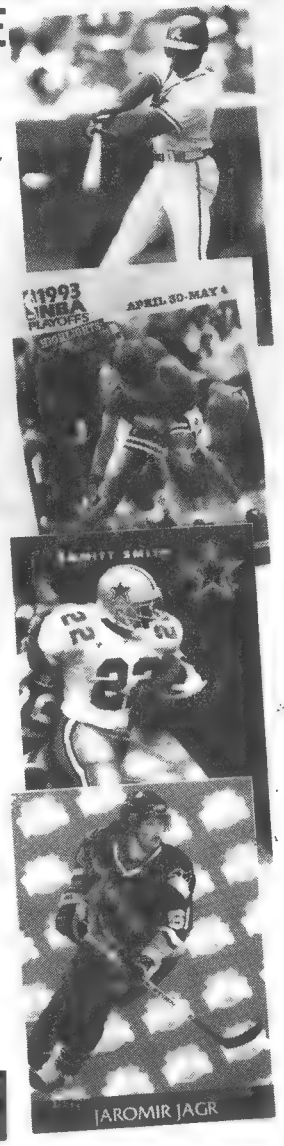

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 22ND

☐ **Adventures of Superman 511** (K Kesel & Kitson & McCarthy) *Bizarro's World, epilogue* The Metropolis clones continue to deteriorate as Superman's growth begins to get out of control. $1.50

☐ **Animal Man 70** (Vertigo; Delano & Pugh) Buddy blames his wife for the death of Maxine. Cliff has a vision at his sister's graveside. Mature readers. $1.95

☐ **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 59** (O'Neil & Wagner + Marcos) *Quarry, Part 1* (of 3). The conclusion of *Knightquest: The Search* begins, bringing Bruce Wayne closer to tracking down the abductors of Robin's father. . $1.75

☐ **Blood Syndicate 13** (Milestone; Velez Jr & Chriscross & Hendrix) The Blood Syndicate attempt to sort out the chaos created by a battle between the Roaches and the Boogieman's rats. $1.50

☐ **Detective Comics 673** (Dixon & Kitson + Hanna) *Knightquest: The Crusade* continues. The Joker battles the Caped Crusader on the set of the clown prince of crimes' latest film venture. $1.50

☐ **Fighting American 3** (of 6; Rawson + McGreal & LaRocque + Space) Fighting American battles the massive Gross National Product in a tale of excess spending. $1.50

☐ **Justice League Task Force 11** (Friedman & Velluto + Albrecht) *Purification Plague, Part 2* (of 3). The Task Force is revealed and the threat of unleashing the deadly virus over Earth becomes more than a possibility. $1.50

☐ **L.E.G.I.O.N '93 #65** (Peyer & Jorgenson + Pascoe) The Brain Bandit becomes a monster and finds he can't cope with the transmutation. $1.75

☐ **Outsiders 6** (Barr & Pelletier + Campanella) The Outsiders battle Jihad — 30,000ft above Gotham City. $1.75

☐ **Sandman 59** (Vertigo; Gaiman & Hempel) *The Kindly Ones* continues. Sandman discovers who the abductor of his son was, and Lyta becomes a Fury again. Mature readers . $1.75

☐ **The Spectre 17** (Ostrander & Mandrake) In a story following on from the last issue of **Eclipso**, the Spectre travels to the god of vengeance's moon base to destroy his inner citadel. $1.75

☐ **Star Trek Next Generation 59** (Friedman & Skelton) Picard must convince the suspicious Chalnoth that the Federation's interest in them is well-intentioned. $1.75

☐ **Steel 3** (L Simonson + Bogdanove & Batista + Faber) John Henry Irons pits his brains and Steel's power against Armertek, suppliers of hi-tech assassination equipment. $1.50

☐ **Swamp Thing 141** (Vertigo; Morrison + Millar & Hester + DeMulder) *Bad Gumbo, Part 2* (of 4). Alec Holland begins a spiritual odyssey to discover the link between him and the rampaging swamp creature. Mature readers. $1.95

☐ **Team Titans 19** (Jensen + Jimenez & Dodson + Blyberg) The Leader's time travel gamble brings the events of past and future crashing around the Titans' ears. $1.75

SHIPPING MARCH 1ST

☐ **Action Comics 698** (Stern & Guice + Rodier) Lex decides it's time to go into hibernation, but sets Lois up for a big fall prior to his departure. $1.50

☐ **American Freak: A Tale of the Un-Men 3** (of 5; Vertigo; Louapre & Locke) Damien begins to doubt the sincerity of Crassus just as the Un-Man disappears. 1.95

☐ **Anima 2** (Witcover + Hand & Davis + Ivy) Anima arrives in Rain City and encounters the Scarecrow, who is experimenting on homeless children. $1.75

☐ **The Batman Adventures 19** (Puckett & Parobeck + Burchett) The return of the Scarecrow is foretold in a dream shared by every inhabitant of Gotham. $1.50

☐ **Catwoman 8** (Duffy & Balent + Parks) Catwoman battles the master thief Zephyr when he offers her the chance to become richer than her wildest dreams. $1.50

☐ **The Darkstars 19** (Friedman & Taylor + Branch) *Eve of Destruction, Part 2* (of 3). Colos, Earth's Darkstar is ordered to bring the rogue to justice at any cost, including that of the Flash's life. $1.75

☐ **Doom Patrol 76** (Vertigo; Pollack & McKeever) *The Teiresas Wars, Part 3* (of 5). The Doom Patrol headquarters becomes under seige from the Builders, a group intent on recreating the Tower of Babel. Mature readers. $1.95

☐ **Green Arrow 85** (Dixon & Aparo + Fernandez) Green Arrow teams up with Deathstroke to dispel rumours that they are brothers. $1.75

☐ **Guy Gardner: Warrior 19** (Dixon & Byrd + Davis) Warrior, minus power ring, dons battle armour to finally defeat Militia. $1.50

NEW ☐ **Looney Tunes 1** (Enyart + Koth & Wildman + various) Monthly anthology of Warner Bros classic tales. . $14.95

☐ **Legends of the World's Finest 3** (of 3; W Simonson & Brereton) The Man of Steel and the Dark Knight confront Tullus, Silver Banshee and Blaze in a dystopian, demonic dream world. 48pg $4.95

☐ **Lobo 5** (Grant & Semieks + Dell) Lobo takes on the job of tracking down Bludhound, a crazed killer suffering from the incurable Rob's disease. $1.75

☐ **Robin 6** (Dixon & Grummett + Kryssing) Robin must discover who is destroying Gotham's public buildings before more lives are lost. .. $1.50

☐ **Scarab 6** (of 8; Vertigo; J Smith & Eaton + Barreiro) Scarab battles the Gloryboys, a team of young telepaths linked into the dead brains of the USSR's greatest minds. Mature readers. $1.95

☐ **Static 11** (Milestone; Washington III & O'Connell + Martinbrough) Static uses the knowledge gained from a recent chemistry lesson to defeat Coil and Puff. $1.50

SHIPPING MARCH 8TH

NEW ☐ **Damage 1** (Joyner & Marimon + McWeeney) First of a series introducing a new superhero. Grant Emerson is the son of two DC superheroes: his powers are developing fast and he needs to find his parents to give him the key to their control. $1.75

☐ **Showcase '94 #4** (anthology) *Batman Villains* (Grant & Sale); *Razorsharpe* (Dixon & Porter); *Blue Beetle* (Augustyn & Rolo). 48pg 1.95

DEFIANT

☐ **Dark Dominion 5** (Wein & James) Glimmer follows the trail of a kidnapped child to a strange and evil place. $2.95

☐ **Defiant: The Origin of the Universe** (Shooter & Lapham + Weiss + Pollina) Readers' edition of the guide to the Defiant Universe, first published as the publisher's ComicFest booklet. 16pg ... $1.50

☐ **Good Guys 4** (Childress & Grey) *Foxhunt, Part two.* Double-sized issue introducing the Wicked Six, a new group of supervillains. .. $3.25

NEW ☐ **War Dancer 1** (Weiss & Marzon) First of a monthly series featuring the one-time Prince of Dreams, Death — the destroyer of worlds. Billed as a pivotal Defiant Universe title. $2.50

☐ **Warriors of Plasm 7** (Wein & Lapham) The team battle the dangerous Wreckreator. Features guest War Dancer. $2.50

DRAWN & QUARTERLY

☐ **Dirty Plotte 8** (Doucet & various) A special section focusing on some of today's top independent cartoonists. Mature readers. 24pg b&w .. $2.95

☐ **Peepshow 6** (Matt) Joe faces the task of choosing a new girlfriend. Mature readers. 24pg b&w .. $2.95

EC COMICS

Features chronological colour reprints of the classic 1950s horror and science fiction line.

☐ **Two-Fisted Tales 7** (anthology) Featuring stories by Jack Davis, Wally Wood, Harvey Kurtzman & George Evans. $2.00

☐ **Vault of Horror 7** (anthology) Featuring stories by Jack Kamen, Graham Ingels, Jack Davis, and Johnny Craig. $2.00

☐ **Weird Fantasy 7** (anthology) Featuring stories by Al Fieldstien, Jack Kamen, George Roussos, and Wally Wood. $2.00

ECLIPSE COMICS

NEW ☐ **The Mists of Avalon 1** (Byam + Parkhouse & Barass + Leach) Adaptation of Marian Zimmer Bradley's classic Arthurian fantasy. 48pg $5.95

☐ **Deadbeats 6** (Claypool/Eclipse; Howell & Villagran) *Fear City, Part 18.* Mystic Grove faces vampire horde. b&w $2.95

☐ **Elvira 10** (Claypool/Eclipse; Busiek & Howell + LaChance + Fry) Elvira enters a charity host contest, where she finds herself competing against other Claypool/Eclipse characters. b&w $2.95

☐ **Soulsearchers and Company 6** (David & Conner + Mooney) *Fear City, Part 17.* The Soulsearchers aim to improve their image and swell their numbers with a dynamic promotional campaign. b&w $2.95

ETERNITY COMICS

☐ **Robotech: Invid War Aftermath 4** (Lewis + Lamphear) Sera and Lancer share visions that help them escape the dread clutches of Lord Hoshq. b&w $2.50

☐ **Robotech: Return to Macross 12** (Spangler & Divar) Breetai versus the virtual reality menaces. b&w . $2.50

FANTAGRAPHICS

NEW ☐ **Alex 1** (Kalesniko) First of the sad adventures of Alex, a constipated and drunken biped dog. 40pg b&w $2.50

☐ **Meat Cake 2** (Darcy) More cartoons from the Appalachian mountains. black & white Mature readers. $2.95

NEW ☐ **Pressed Tongue 1** (Dave Cooper) The tale of a perverse landlord who believes he has found the fountain of youth in a baby's shit. Mature readers. 2.95

☐ **Real Girl 6** (various) Stories this issue include a contribution from Trina Robbins. b&w $3.50

IMAGE COMICS

☐ **Bloodstrike 8** (Extreme Studios) Chapel of Youngblood is forced to join the Bloodstrike and begins his descent towards madness. . $1.95

☐ **Brigade 7** (Extreme Studios) Battlestone sacrifices body and soul to defeat Worlok. $1.95

☐ **Codename Stryke Force 3** (Silvestri & Peterson + Chiodo) The squad battle for their lives in a deep-sea death trap. $1.95

☐ **Freak Force 3** (Larsen + Giffen & Bridges) A menace from Mighty Man's past returns and soon all hell breaks loose. $1.95

NEW ☐ **Gen 13 #1** (Lee + Choi & Campbell + Garner) First of an ongoing series about four mutated teenagers and the government agency that is out to catch them. $2.50

☐ **Maxx 8** (Keith + Loebs) It's Maxx versus the Pitt in this conclusion to a two-issue story. This time the pair fight in the Outback. $1.95

NEW ☐ **The Pact 1** (Shadowline Studios) Introductory issue, in which a group of super-mercenaries are despatched to bring back their unruly partners. .. $1.95

☐ **Pitt 3** (Keown) The bounty hunters have been despatched, but Pitt must now face Creed leader Zoyvod 1.95

☐ **Shadowhawk III #3** (Shadowline Studios) The answer to how

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☐ **Supreme 10** (Extreme Studios) Supreme gives an account of himself via an internationally-broadcast live TV interview. $1.95
☐ **Team Youngblood 6** (Extreme Studios) Youngblood return to Washington and a team crisis. $1.95
☐ **Vanguard 5** (Larsen + Carlson & Medina & Sinclair) Featuring the Berserker, from Caliber Comics' Gauntlet imprint. $1.95
☐ **WildC.A.T.S 8** (Lee + Choi + Williams) The team takes a break from saving the world — but not for too long... ..... $1.95

INNOVATION

NEW ☐ **Hero Alliance: Tarnished Gold 1** (Broderick & Jones + Forcer) First in a new series, set two years after the last series' finale. $2.50
☐ **Lost In Space: Voyage to the Bottom of the Soul 9** (Mumy & Dutkiewicz) Will must take a life to prevent Dr Smith's death. ... $2.50
☐ **Mack Bolan: The Executioner 8** (Pendleton & Florea) Mack Bolan continues his flight from both the law and the lawless. $2.50
NEW ☐ **Quantum Leap Annual 1** (Broderick & Ross + Deodato Jr) First annual edition for the US TV series' adaptation. Quantum computer Ziggy makes a mistake — and changes places with time-leaping Dr Sam Beckett. $2.95

KITCHEN SINK

☐ **Eden** (Hdbk; Vince) Reprint of a story serialised in **Heavy Metal** 48pg $14.95
NEW ☐ **People's Comics** (Crumb) Classic Crumb reprints from the 1970s, including *Fritz the Cat*. $4.95
☐ **Melting Pot 3** (Eastman & Bisley + Talbot) Lord Tyler contracts a fatal disease from the enigmatic Sade. Mature readers. $2.95
☐ **The Spirit: The Origin Years 11** (Eisner) Reprints pre-war Spirit stories. b&w $2.95

LIGHTNING

☐ **Bloodfire 9** (Lawrence & Parr + Rohrbeck + Zyskowski) Bloodfire discovers the truth of his origins and decides that the perpetrator of the crime will pay with his life. .. $2.95
☐ **Judgement Day 6** (Lawrence + Lasota & Weed + Zyskowski) Salubrio's power increases, and assumes some sinister aspects. 2.95
☐ **Perg 5** (Watkins-Chow + Parr & Weed + Zyskowski) Alli and Perg find solace in each others' company as Lucifer weaves a deception. . $2.95

MAJESTIC

☐ **S.T.A.T. 3** (Schiller & Hester + Sellers) Brick goes AWOL from S.T.A.T, leaving the team no choice but to dispatch Wildside to bring him to his senses. $2.50
☐ **Legacy 4** (Petrucha & Morgan + Koch) Legacy must sacrifice himself to keep the Protector alive. . $2.25
NEW ☐ **Heroes Like Us 1** (Schiller & Lawlis) First of a monthly series about a superheroic duo, Animus and Double Edge, in this **S.T.A.T. 3** spin-off. $2.50

MALIBU

☐ **'Breed 2** (of 6; Bravura; Starlin) The eponymous hero co-operates with the army to discover the events that lead to his birth. $2.50
☐ **Dinosaurs for Hire 13** (Genesis/Malibu; Mason & Aucion + McCorkindale) While on a job to track down the long-lost relative of a famous baron the Dinosaurs run into Lil' Billy Frankenstein. $2.50
☐ **Ex-Mutants 16** (Genesis/Malibu; Marshall & Rolo + Rae) Former Ex-Mutant Shannon decimates the team with her incredible new powers$2.25
☐ **The Ferret 10** (Genesis/Malibu; Jones & Zachary) A supernatural rapist stalks the streets and Ferret's lady cop friend encounters something far too serious for the police to handle. $2.25
☐ **Firearm 6** (Ultraverse; Robinson & ?) Firearm is hired by Kevin Green's father to rescue Prime from Colonel Samuels. $1.95
☐ **Freex 8** (Ultraverse; Jones & Herrera + Christian) Lost Angel and his bizarre horde still has the Freex on the run. $1.95
☐ **Hardcase 9** (Ultraverse; Hudnall & Benefiel + Christian) More clues to the real identity and origin of Choice are revealed. $1.95
☐ **Mantra 8** (Ultraverse; Barr & TBA) Mantra and Warstrike's strange fairground relationship continues to develop. $1.95
☐ **The Night Man 5** (Ultraverse; Englehart & Hotz + Gil) Hood promises Johnny Domino eternal life — but at a price.... ..... $1.95
NEW ☐ **Power & Glory 1** (of 4; Bravura; Chaykin) First of a limited series questioning which nation makes the best superheroes. Mature readers. $2.50
☐ **Prime 9** (Ultraverse; Jones + Strazewski & Breyfogle) Colonel Samuels kidnaps Prime, leaving Kevin's father to find someone to spring him. $1.95
☐ **Protectors 18** (Genesis/Malibu; Jones & Lee) The Regulators are hero haters with big guns; and their first targets the Protectors. .. $2.25
☐ **Prototype 6** (Mason + Stazewski & Robinson + Whiting) Hi-tech samurai Arena teaches the new Prototype the art of bushido. $1.95
☐ **Rune 2** (Windsor-Smith + Ulm + Floyd) Rune continues his search for an antidote to the condition that withers his flesh. $1.95
☐ **Sludge 5** (Gerber & Lopresti + Martin) Sludge goes head-to-head with another man-made monster in the sewers. $1.95
☐ **The Solution 6** (Ultraverse; Hudnall & ?) Part one of a three-part origin story. $1.95
☐ **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine 7** (Strazewski & Davis + Pallot) Kira takes some leave on a recreational world, but feels that all is not right on the planet of fun. $2.50
☐ **The Strangers 9** (Ultraverse; Englehart & Hoberg + Simons) The Strangers face Ultra-pirate Jolly Roger on the high seas. $1.95
☐ **Wrath 2** (Barr & Ammerman + Pascoe) Wrath teams up with Mantra to battle a team of ex-Aladdin agents, the Renegades. $1.95

MARVEL COMICS

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 1ST

☐ **Biker Mice From Mars 6** (Unger & Tyler + Fields) $1.50
☐ **2099 Unlimited 4** (Jones & Birch + McKenna) Hulk 2099 battles a genetically-altered urban landscape designer. $3.95
☐ **Cable 10** (Nicieza & Wyman + Vey) Cable journeys to Muir Island for a confrontation with his sister Rachel. Omega Red decides to spoil the reunion. $2.00
☐ **Captain America 426** (Gruenwald & Hoover + Bulanadi) Super Patriot pretends to be Cap in order to discredit the superhero. $1.25
☐ **Daredevil 327** (Chichester & McDaniel + Collazo) *Tree of Knowledge, Part 2* (of 5). Daredevil and Captain America stage their assault on HYDRA. The Kingpin begins regaining his power. . $1.25
☐ **Darkhawk 38** (Fingeroth & Smith + Akin) Darkhawk travels to outer space to gain an understanding of his amulet — and runs into an usual group of hostile aliens. $1.25
☐ **Force Works 2** (Abnett + Lanning & Tenney + Deming) The mystery behind Century deepens Tony Stark reveals more of his past. ... $1.25
☐ **Groo the Wanderer 111** (Marvel/Epic; Aragones + Evanier) Groo battles the man that killed Groo... ..... $2.25
☐ **Hawkeye 4** (of 4; Dixon & Kolins + Dzon) Hawkeye's tale of secret agendas & mutation concludes: 1.75
☐ **Marvel Comics 151** (anthology) *Vengeance* (Cooper & Jones); *Moon Knight* (Dixon & Birch); *War Machine* (Kaminski & Benson) and *Wolverine* (Zimmerman & Yomtov). ... $1.50
☐ **Namor 49** (Herdling & Isherwood) Valentine's Day special, in which the Prince of the seas remembers all his previous loves. $1.25
☐ **Nightstalkers 18** (Lovece & Wheatley + Turner) The Nightstalkers' last issue, preluding the forthcoming **Blade, Vampire Slayer** series. $1.75
☐ **Nomad 24** (Nicieza & Mays) Nomad finally realises his potential and becomes the super-soldier he was destined to be. $1.75
☐ **Pinhead 5** (Epic/Clive Barker; Chichester & Carrasco) Pinhead must stop Aggregate from unleashing the hordes of Hell. $2.50
☐ **Punisher Armoury 9** (Brown) Presenting the latest in designer killing implements, courtesy of Marvel's weapons master. .. $2.00
☐ **Ren & Stimpy 17** (Slott & Kazaleh) Derived from Nickelodeon's *Ren & Stimpy* TV series. ... $1.75
☐ **Saint Sinner 7** (Epic/Razorline; E.Lee & Brown + Bryant) Saint Sinner discovers the origin of Crooked-Face Half-Head. $1.75
☐ **Scarlet Witch 4** (of 4; Abnett & Lanning & Higgins + McKenna) Wanda cleans up the chaos created by Master Pandemonium in this final part of her solo series. $1.75
☐ **Spider-Man 2099 18** (David & Leonardi + Williamson) Spider-Man gets to grips with Discord. .. $1.25
☐ **Spider-Man Classics 13** (Lee & Ditko + Kirby) Reprinting **Amazing Spider-Man 12**. $1.25
☐ **Starblast 4** (Gruenwald & Trimpe + Cabrera) *Starblast, Part 12*. Last in the series. $1.75
☐ **Spider-Man: Mutant Agenda 2** (of 3; Grant & Kolins + DeLaRosa) Spider-Man and the Beast struggle to prevent the Brand Corporation destroying mutantkind. $1.75
☐ **Uncanny X-Men 311** (Lobdell & Romita Jr) Sunfire returns to help Storm locate Wolverine's missing adopted daughter. $1.25
☐ **Web of Spider-Man 111** (Kavanagh & Saviuk + Baskerville) The final showdown between Spider-Man, The Lizard and Warrant has devastating effects on the Lizard's human aspects. $1.25

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 8TH

☐ **Amazing Spider-Man 388** (Michelinie & Bagley + Emberlin) The deaths of the people who claim to be Peter Parker's parents, and a turning point in his life. $2.95
☐ **Barbie 40** (Robbins & Wiltshire) Time-travelling for Skipper. . $1.25
NEW ☐ **Captain America: Drug Wars** (David + Caragonne & Velluto + Doran + Williams + Adams) One-shot, in which Cap and the New Warriors attempt to prevent an evil race, the Tzin, from corrupting the planet with a new drug. $2.95
☐ **Ghost Rider 48** (Mackie & Garney + Ivy) Vengeance, the new Ghost Rider and Spider-Man team up to stop a spate of cop-killings. . $1.75
☐ **Guardians of the Galaxy 47** (Gallagher & West + Montano) Hollywood continues to be obsessed with killing Dr Doom. $1.25
☐ **Harrowers 5** (Epic/Clive Barker; Smith & Colan + Garzon) The team have something Pinhead wants — and they're not going to give it up without a fight. $2.50
☐ **Hyperkind 8** (Epic/Razorline; Burke & Cullins + Petrecia) Hyperkind discover that not all of the original Paxis team are dead. $1.75
☐ **Night Thrasher 9** (Nicieza & Boller) Drug addict Tantrum begs Thrash to kill him rather than let him die a slow and painful death. $1.75
☐ **Nova 4** (Nicieza & Marrinan + Stegbauer) Nova encounters Nova 0:0 — a carbon copy of Nova, but much better equipped, ... $1.75
☐ **Punisher War Zone 26** (Dixon & J Buscema) The Punisher intervenes in a revolution to stop a drugs cartel supplying the US. $1.75
☐ **Quasar 57** (Gruenwald & Heebink) *Starblast, Epilogue*. Quasar

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is not pleased with the Enclave's treatment of her, and do they ever *know* it. $1.25

☐ **Ravage 2099 17** (Mills + Skinner & Miehm + Williams) Ravage battles Throwback, his doppelganger. $1.25

☐ **Secret Defenders 14** (Mars & Grindberg + Hudson) Thanos falls foul of some wronged aliens and calls on the Silver Surfer and Firelord to help deal with them. $1.75

☐ **The Shroud 2** (of 4; Barr & Wyman + Jones III) The Shroud and Spider-Man battle the Scorpion and the Mob. $1.75

☐ **Silver Sable 23** (Wright & TBD + Eklund) Deadpool is offered the contract on Sable, but questions accepting it. $1.25

NEW ☐ **War Machine 1** (Kaminski + Benson & Gecko + Eklund) First of an ongoing series featuring the alternative Iron Man and his desperate quest for a quiet life. $2.95

☐ **Wolverine 80** (Hama & Kubert + Farmer) Wolverine v Cyber, with a little help from Nightcrawler. Logan discovers what happens when one of his claws breaks. $1.75

☐ **Wonder Man 31** (Jones & Randall & Joyce) No information available at press time. $1.25

☐ **X-Factor 101** (DeMatteis & Duursema & Milgrom) The death of a team member effects the whole team, but especially Rahne, who has lost so many friends since joining the mutants. $1.25

☐ **X-Men Adventures Season II #3** (Macchio & Wildman & Albrecht) Fox TV adaptation. $1.25

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 15TH

☐ **Avengers 373** (Harras & Epting + Palmer) The Avengers have to choose whether to side with Sersi or the villainous Proctor. $1.25

☐ **Beavis & Butt-Head 2** (Lackey & Parker) Based on characters in the MTV series. $1.95

☐ **Conan Saga 85** (Thomas & J Buscema + Palmer) Sword and sorcery reprints. $2.25

☐ **Cosmic Powers 2** (of 6; Marz & Lim + Palmiotti) Former Galactus herald Terrax takes centre stage this issue. 48pg $2.50

☐ **Doom 2099 #16** (Moore & Broderick + Nyberg) Doom travels to China to help Fortune find her brother, but ends up in a confrontation with an alien warrior while there. $1.25

☐ **Ectokid 8** (Epic/Razorline; Wachowski & Skroce + Dvorak) Dex discovers that he has the power to merge with other existences. $1.75

☐ **Excalibur 76** (Ashford & Lashly + Smith) The origin of Nightcrawler begins as he discovers vital information about his foster mother, Margali Szardos. $1.75

☐ **GI Joe 147** (Hama & Gosier + Wallace) Introducing the Star Brigade, the intergalactic wing of the Joes. $1.25

☐ **Incredible Hulk 416** (David & Frank + Smith) *The Troyjan War, Part 4* (of 4). Guest starring the Silver Surfer and the StarJammers, this issue ties in with the **Future Imperfect** mini-series. The Hulk faces Trauma's father. $1.25

☐ **Marvel Age 135** Featuring covers by John Buscema (**Punisher**) & Rafael Kayanan (**Conan the Adventurer**) and news of forthcoming Marvel projects. $1.25

☐ **Marvel Comics 152** (anthology) *Vengeance* (Cooper & Jones); *Moon Knight* (Dixon & Birch); *War Machine* (Benson & Czop) and *Wolverine* (Zimmerman & Ettiene). $1.50

☐ **Marvel Tales 284** (Defalco & Frenz + Breeding) Reprinting **Amazing Spider-Man** 276. . $1.25

☐ **Midnight Sons Unlimited 5** (Quinn & Hixson + Koblish) Featuring a guest appearance by Dr Strange. 64pg $3.95

☐ **Morbius 20** (Wright & Napolitano + Cabrera) Morbius accidentally unleashes Bloodthirst on an unsuspecting world. $1.75

☐ **Punisher 89** (Dixon & Heath) The Punisher steps in when martial law is imposed in Miami. $1.25

NEW ☐ **Punisher in the 'Nam: Final Invasion** (Lomax & Saichann) Frank Castle's final trip to the 'Nam. 80pg $6.95

NEW ☐ **Ren & Stimpy: Powdered Toast Man 1** (Slott & Templeton) Derived from Nickelodeon's *Ren & Stimpy* animated TV series. $2.95

☐ **Spider-Man 45** (Mackie & Lyle + Hanna) Spider-Man goes on a vengeance-driven mission to find the man who killed his parents. .. $1.75

☐ **Thunderstrike 7** (DeFalco & Frenz + Milgrom) Code Blue loses a team member and Thunderstrike gets a thorough beating. $1.25

☐ **Transformers: Generation 2 #6** (Furman & Galan + Yanigher) Optimus Prime wants peace. ... 1.75

☐ **Warlock and the Infinity Watch 27** (Starlin & Grindberg + Almond) Warlock and the Watch battle the Avengers in a powerplay orchestrated by Senator Munson. .. $1.75

☐ **What If? 60** (Furman & Hitch + Rubinstein) The wedding of Cyclops and Jean Grey. $1.25

☐ **X-Men 31** (Nicieza & Andy Kubert + Ryan) Psylocke in a solo story revealing more of her origin and a link to the dying Revanche. $1.25

☐ **X-Men 2099 #7** (Moore & Lim) Xi'an takes a near-fatal blow from a member of the Freak Show. . $1.25

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 22ND

☐ **Barbie Fashion 40** (Slate & Cool & Lucas) Love is in the air, but a mix-up means Barbie may be separated from Ken. $1.25

☐ **Deathlok 34** (Wright & Kobasic + Adams) Deathlok's grand finale, with all the time-locked Deathloks fighting for supremacy. $1.75

☐ **Dr Strange 64** (Quinn & Rubi + Harper) The mystery surrounding the disappearance of Stephen Strange deepens as four possible candidates for the mantle of Strange are introduced. $1.75

☐ **Fantastic Four 387** (DeFalco & Ryan + Bulanadi) *Nobody gets out Alive, Part 1* (of 4) Beginning the end of the Fantastic Four, as the now adult Franklin gets bored and decides to destroy the planet. $1.25

☐ **Ghost Rider/Blaze: Spirits of Vengeance 21** (Quinn & Martinez + LaRosa) Blaze has to face the shape-shifting wolf people. $1.75

☐ **Hellstorm 13** (Ellis & Manco) Hellstrom confronts a demonic killer who wears the entrails of its victims to exhibit his success. $2.00

☐ **Hokum & Hex 8** (Epic/ Razorline; Lovece & Williams + Lanning) Trip journeys to the Neosphere, a place where the collected unconsciousness of humankind is captured. .. $1.75

☐ **Iron Man 303** (Kaminski & Hopgood + Mitchell) Former Stark employee Marcy Pearson starts to succeed in her smear campaign against Stark. Meanwhile Venom tests Iron Man's mettle. $1.25

☐ **Marvels 4** (of 4; Busiek & A Ross) This issue has been postponed for one month. $5.95

☐ **New Warriors 46** (Nicieza & Robertson + Mahlstedt) Team members from both **X-Force** and the Warriors change sides in the crossover;s conclusion. $1.25

NEW ☐ **Nightwatch 1** (Kavanagh & Lim + Milgrom) First of an ongoing series featuring the popular supporting character from **Web of Spider-Man**. 48pg $2.50

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☐ **Punisher 2099 #15** (Mills + Skinner & Morgan + Palmiotti) Jake battles the Fearmaster in the conclusion of a storyline begun in the first issue. $1.25

☐ **Punisher War Journal 65** (Grant & Haynes) *Pariah, Part 1* (of 4). The Punisher fights a new war against radically different foes. $2.95

☐ **Silver Surfer 91** (Marz & Lim + Christopher) Silver Surfer fools with virtual reality, unaware that he's being stalked by Avatar. $1.25

☐ **Spectacular Spider-Man 211** (Grant & S Buscema) Spider-Man continues his search for the people who killed his parents. $1.25

☐ **William Shatner's Tekworld 20** (Marvel/Epic; Skolnick & Sullivan) Jake and Gomez invade a Japanese corporation via satellite. $1.75

☐ **Thor 473** (Marz & Grindberg & Hudson) *Brother's Keeper Part 2.* Thor battles Loki — and the evil brother is winning. $1.25

☐ **Venom: The Enemy Within 3** (of 3; Jones + McLeod) Venom, Morbius and the Demogoblin battle in Palentine's invasion of San Francisco. $2.95

☐ **X-Force 33** (Nicieza & Daniel) X-Force join the New Warriors in the third of a four-part crossover. $1.25

☐ **X-Men Classic 94** (Claremont & Romita Jr + Green) Reprint. Cover: Raney. $1.25

MARVEL UK

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Some of the following may be postponed (see cover story).

NEW ☐ **Killfrenzy 1** (of 4; Georgiou & Flint) First of a limited series featuring a cross-species mercenary's travels across the galaxy in search of violence and more conflict. $1.75

NEW ☐ **Wild Angels 2** (of 4; Vince & Rinaldi) Dark Angel and Wild Thing team up to deal with the madman Mendes. .. $1.95

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☐ **Death's Head II / Killpower: Battletide III #3** (of 4; Abnett + Lanning & Senior + Stokes) Death's Head and Killpower unite with the Dark Guard to stop Battletide. $1.95

☐ **Loose Cannons 2** (of 4; Abnett & Harrison) Series about an all-female Warheads team. $2.50

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☐ **Alan Davis's The ClanDestine 2** (of 4; Davis) Superpowered family enters the spotlight and moves into action when their family begins to be aggressively diminished $1.95

SHIPPING FEBRUARY 22ND

☐ **Death's Head II #17** (Abnett & Larroca) A quiet holiday on Mars ends in the inevitable mayhem $1.95

Death Wreck 4 (of 4; Houston & Johnson + Riggs) Death Wreck saves his partner from Lord Burgen $1.95

Death Metal 4 (of 4; Furman & Royle + Riggs) Death Metal finds he is worth more alive than dead. . $1.95

☐ **Doctor Who: Classic Comics 16** (various) Classic reprints from the 1960s and 1970s. $4.95

☐ **Doctor Who 209** (Abnett & Ridgway) An alien attempts to infiltrate Victorian society.... $4.95

MILLENNIUM

☐ **The Witching Hour 8** (Eagleson & Collins + Rice) Continuing adaptation of Anne Rice's novel. $2.50

☐ **Asylum 6** (Okamoto & Howard + Lang + Hutchinson) Features adapted works from Robert E Howard and H P Lovecraft. $2.50

MIRAGE STUDIOS

☐ **Stupid Heroes 3** (Laird & Brown)The secret behind Project Tarbaby is revealed. $2.75

☐ **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Vol 2 #3** (Lawson + Minor) A mysterious robot escapes from the D.A.R.P.A. lab. $2.75

☐ **TMNT/Flaming Carrot: Land of Green Fire 4** (of 4; Burden & Vokes + Woodring) The Turtles and the Carrot are the world's last hope as they team up to prevent an invasion from the Sun. $2.75

NEMESIS COMICS

☐ **Frank 3** (Chichester & Cowan) The process of Frank's creation is revealed. $2.50

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TRIUMPHANT

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VALIANT

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☐ **Ninjak 4** (Moretti) Ninjak begins to unravel the mystery of the Seventh Dragon. $2.25
☐ **Rai & The Future Force 21** (Bedard & Ross) Introducing The Starwatchers. The Malev war heats up and the course of 41st-century history is changed. $2.25
☐ **Second Life of Doctor Mirage 7** (Layton & Chang + Branch) Mirage must face the psychotic and lethally powerful Doctor Eclipse. $2.50
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☐ **Turok: Dinosaur Hunter 11** (Baron & Morales + Elliot) Turok battles Chun Yee's pet dragon.$2.50
☐ **X-O Manowar 28** (Gonzalez + Levins) Aric watches helplessly as the Good Skin fights its toughest battle yet and loses. $2.25

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

☐ **Animerica Vol 2:2** (anthology magazine) Manga strips, interviews, news, etc. Magazine. 64pg . $4.95
☐ **Battle Angel Alita Part 3 #4** (of 13; Kishiro) Alita fights for the privilege of wearing number 99 on her back during the games. . $2.75
☐ **Bio-Booster Armor Guyver 5** (of 12; Takaya) Sho dons the Guyver suit once again. $2.75
☐ **Maison Ikkoku Part Two 2** (of 6; Takahashi) Yusaka faces a crisis of Christmas presents. b&w 40pg$2.95
☐ **Mobile Suit Gundam 0083 3** (of 13; Production cels) Albion searches for the stolen Unit 2 on the African continent. 48pg $4.95
☐ **Mermaid Forest 3** (of 4; Takahashi) Yuta — the boy who wishes for immortality — finds himself in Mermaid's Forest. b&w ... $2.75
☐ **Ranma 1/2 Part 3 #3** (Takahashi) Ranma's kissing of Akane has unexpected repercussions. b&w $2.75
NEW ☐ **Promise 1** (Nishi) Viz's 1st excursion into Shojo Manga or girls' comics. 80pg $5.95
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NEW ☐ **Ultraman Classic: Battle of the Ultra-Brothers 2** (of 5; Uchiyama) Reprint of the first *Ultraman*. $4.95

WARP GRAPHICS

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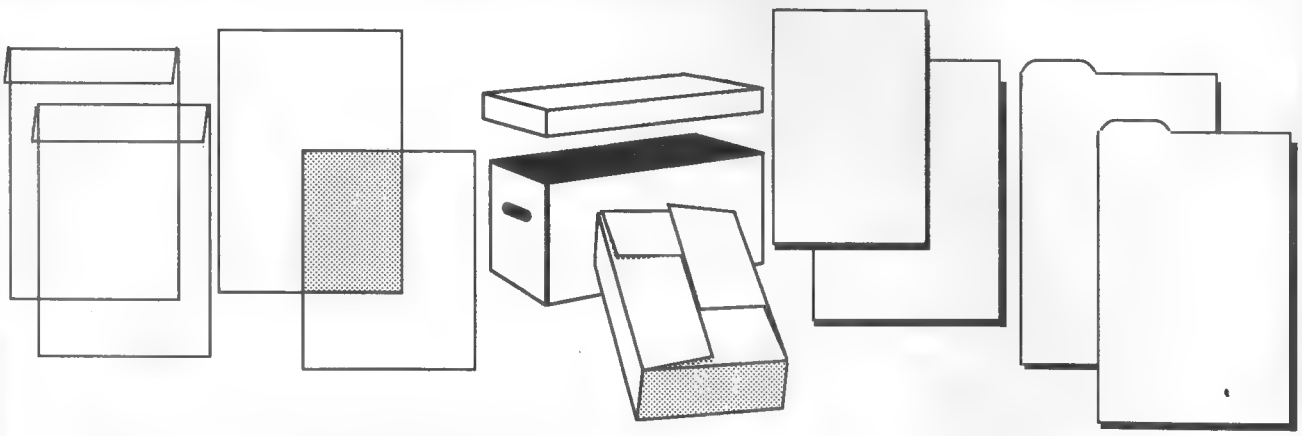

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s-p	= small press & fanzines
merch	= comics-related trading cards, T-shirts, posters, models, etc
Ind	= US independent comics (non-newsstand titles)
Brit	= British comics & albums
frgn	= foreign language comics
u/g	= underground comics
gn	= graphic novels & trade paperback editions
STO	= standing order service, new comics reserved
RPG	= role playing games

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■ **Platinum Age Comics/Bayswater Books**, 27 Craven Terrace, Lancaster Gate, London W2 3EL. Mon - Sat 11-7 (but sometimes till midnight!) (back, ind, u/g, general 2nd hand books, search service) 071 402 7398

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Hamleys**, 4th Floor, 188/196 Regent Street, London W1 6BT. Mon-Wed 10-6.30; Thur 10-8; Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-7; Sun 12-6 (imp, back, ind, gn merch, Brit, STO) 071-287 3097

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Virgin Megastore**, 14 Oxford Street, London W1N 9FL. Mon-Sat 9.30-8.00; Sun 12.00-7.00 (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, gn, STO) 071-637 4066 (fax 071 637 3966)

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Virgin**, 1st Floor, Virgin Marble Arch, 527-531 Oxford St, London W1. Mon-Wed & Fri 9.30-7.30; Thurs 9.30-8; Sat 9-7.30; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, gn, STO) 071-499 8839

OUTER LONDON

■ **Altered Images**, 6 The Arcade, High St, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1ET. Mon-Wed & Fri 10-5.30; Thurs 10 - 6.30; Sat 9 - 6 (imp, back, ind merch, Brit, gn, STO) 081 770 3815

■ **Andy's Comic Cavern**, Windsor Open Market (back of Woolworth's), Bachelors Acre, Windsor. Sats only 7.30-4.00 (imp, back, ind, gn, STO) Free delivery for Windsor & Slough area. 0753 853381

■ **Atomic Comics**, 1112 High Rd, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 4AH. Mon-Sat 10 -6 excl Fri 10-7 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, 2nd hand horror fantasy sf bks, original art) 081-597 8547

■ **Calamity Comics**, 160 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2HR. Mon-Wed 10-6, Thurs & Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy tv & film bks & merch, Sega & Nintendo game cartridges, videos) 081-427 3831

■ **Calamity Comics 2**, 90 Queens Road, The Broadway, Watford, Herts WD1 2LA. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs & Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy tv & film bks & merch, videos) 0923 249293

■ **Comic Shack**, 720 High Road, Leytonstone, London E11 3NN. Mon-Thurs 9.30-5.30; Fri & Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 11-5.30. Also by appointment (imp, back, s-p, merch, u/g, gn, hbks) 081-539 7260/081-555 9303 (eve)

■ **Dynamic Comics**, Units 43-47, In Shops Centre, 68 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RB. Mon - Sat 9 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, s-p, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, merch) phone & fax 081-681 2597

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-7; Fri 10-8; Sat 9-6 (imp, back, s-p merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 081-298 1363

■ **Gary's Book & Comic Stall**, Site A65, The High Street, Walthamstow, London E17. Thur + Fri 10-5; Sat 8-5.30. Tube: Walthamstow Central (imp, back, s-p, ind, gn, STO, annuals, children's books)

■ **Graphically Speaking**, 49 Roman Road, London E2. Mon-Wed & Sat 11-6; Thur-Fri 11-7; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, s-p, merch, u/g, Brit, ind, STO, gn) 081 983 4602

■ **Krypton Komics**, 252 High Rd, Tottenham, London N15 4AJ (next to Tesco) Mon-Wed 10-6; Thur-Fri 9.30-7; Sat 9-6. Tube: Seven Sisters Road. (imp, back, s-p, ind, gn, STO) 081-801 5378

■ **Readers Dream**, 100A Harlington Road West, Feltham (near Heathrow airport) Middx TW14 0JJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-6.00 excl Wed - closed (imp, back, gn, STO) 081-844 0780

■ **Skinny Melink's**, 66 Loampit Vale, Lewisham, London SE13. Mon-Thur 11- 6.30; Fri 11-7; Sat 10-6.30; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, ind s-p, u/g, gn, STO) 081-318 0499

■ **South London Book Centre**, 18-19 Stockwell Street, Greenwich, London SE10 9JN. Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat & Sun 9am-5.30pm (imp, back, ind, gn, u/g, 2nd hand & new SF-horror-fantasy novels, art bks, bargain bks, remainders) 081 659 9714 or 081 853 2151

■ **Stateside Comics PLC**, 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, Herts EN4 8RF. Mon-Wed 10.00-7.00; Thur-Fri 10.00-8.00; Sat 9.00-6.00; Sun 10.00-3.00 (later by appointment). (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, Brit, frgn, tv-film & fantasy, gn, STO) 081-449 5535

■ **They Walk Among Us**, 30 Union Court, Sheen Rd, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1AA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 excl Fri 9.30-6 (imp, merch, back, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, fantasy/s-f/horror books, sub-culture, STO, wants lists welcomed) Phone/fax 081 948 8476

■ **Time Trek**, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1TR. Mon - Sat 9 - 5.30 (late Thurs to 8) (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, sf TV & film related merch, STO) 081 313 0677

■ **Westside Comics**, 392 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 0EL. Mon-Sat 10-6, late Thurs-Fri to 6.30. (imp, back, ind, Brit, gn, STO). 081-813 5019

SOUTH EAST

■ **American Comic Enterprise**, 1 Headgate Buildings, St John's Street, Colchester, Essex C02 7AD. Mon - Sat 10.00am - 5.30pm. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts) 0206 561 912

■ **Cartoon Shop**, Upper Galleries, Eastgate Shopping Centre, Basildon, Essex. Mon - Wed & Sat 10-6, Thurs & Fri 10-8 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG) 0268 534194

■ **Cartoon Shop**, 21-22 Talza Way, Lower Ground Floor, Victoria Circus Centre, Southend-on-Sea, Essex. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG) 0702 613021

■ **The Comic Rocket**, 75a Camden Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Mon-Wed 10 - 4.30; Thur-Fri 10 - 7.30; Sat 9.30 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, gn, u/g, STO) 0892 518771

■ **Comic Showcase**, 19-20 St Clements St, Oxford. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, gn, STO) 0865-723680

● **Comics and Cards**, 84 St Mary Street, Southampton SO1 1NZ. Mon-Sat 8.00-7.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) ph/fax: 0703 235324

■ **Excaliber Comics**, 24 The Hornet, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 4JG. Mon - Fri 10.00 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 6.00 (imp, back, ind, s-p, gn, merch, Brit, STO, RPG, videos) 0243 537070

■ **Fantastic Store**, 14 Gardner St, Brighton BN1 1PL. Mon-Wed 9.00-6.00; Thur 9.00-8.00; Fri-Sat 9.00-6.00 (imp, back, ind, s-p, u/g, gn, Brit, STO) 0273 25300

■ **Incognito Comic Shop**, 14 Starnes Court, Union St, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, Brit, STO, film/tv related merch) 0622-683642

■ **Siegi's Comics & Bags**, Unit 3, 6 Orange St, Canterbury, Kent. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, gn, STO, tv SF, gum cards, sf memorabilia) 0227 470840

■ **Slough Computers**, 245 High Street, Slough, Berks SL1 1BN. Mon-Sat 9.00-5.30. (imp, ind, gn, STO, Sega & Nintendo game carts) 0753 521594

■ **Volume One Bookshops**, 12a North Street, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4AF. Mon-Sat 8.30-8.00, Sun 11.00-5.00. (imp, ind, gn, sf - fantasy - horror bks & videos) 0483 453412

■ **Whatever Comics**, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, model kits) 0227 453226

● **Wokingham Comics & Trading Cards**, Wokingham Indoor Market, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham, Berkshire. Sats only (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, STO) 0734 790441

■ **Wonderworld**, 133 St Mary Street, Southampton S01 1NX. Tues-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, FRPG & miniatures) 0703 634658

MIDLANDS

■ **Another World**, 23 Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0533 515266

■ **Another World**, 11 Market Street, Nottingham. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0602 484122

■ **Arrival Comics & Books**, 2 Broad Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1HP. Mon-Wed 10.30-5.30; closed Thurs; Fri-Sat 9.30-5.30. (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit) 0902-313 660

■ **Bookworm**, Unit 3, 33-39 Tower Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk. Mon-Sat 11.00 - 4.00 (back, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, fantasy & sf, early Penguins, general fic & non-fic, records) 0553 760904/771880

■ **Central City Comics**, 4 Eagle Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1JB. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, frgn, gn, STO) 0473 233017

■ **Comics Unlimited**, 4 Clair Court, Lime Street, Bedford MK40 1NH. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, gn, Brit, u/g, STO, RPG) 0234 218984

■ **Comics Unlimited**, Unit 11, The Arcade, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, gn, Brit, u/g, STO, RPG) 0462 480018

■ **Demon Comics**, 12 Berrington Street, Hereford HR4 0BJ. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, merch, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, t-shirts, sci-fi models) 0432 358355

■ **Fantastic Store**, 6 Suffolk St, Queensway, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Mon-Fri 9.30 - 6.00; Sat 9.00 - 6.00 (imp, back, ind, u/g, s-p, gn, Brit, STO) 021 643 3667

■ **Fantastic Store**, 48 Friar Lane, Nottingham NG1. Mon-Sat 9.00-6.00 (imp, ind, back, u/g, s-p, gn, Brit, STO) 0602 476246

■ **Fantasy World**, 10 Market Square Arcade, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1NU. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0782 279294 (fax 0782 202381)

■ **The Final Frontier**, 29 St Nicholas Place, Leicester LE1 4LD. Mon - Fri 9.30 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 5.00. (imp, back, ind, Brit, gn, STO) Established 1984 0533 514347

■ **Ground Zero**, 11 Handley Arcade, Mansfield, Notts NG18 1NQ. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.00 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, STO, accessories) 0623 22017

■ **Magic Labyrinth**, 34-36 Rutland Street, Leicester, LE1 1RD Mon - Sat 9.30 - 6.00. (imp, back, ind, gn, u/g, frgn, merch, s-p, STO, RPG) 0533 518178 fax:0533 518179

■ **Mephisto Comics**, 81 Ber Street, Norwich, NR1 3RD. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, gn, ind, s-p, u/g, Brit, STO) 0603 762762

■ **New Worlds**, 22 West Parade, Lincoln LN1 1JT. Mon-Sat 9.30-4.30 excl Wed - closed. (comics, bks, mags, sf & fantasy specialists) 0522 530069

■ **Nowhere Comics**, Units 7-8 Guildhall Mews, Goodall St, Walsall. (top end of market) Mon-Thur 10.30-5.30, Fri-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, videos) 0922 643352

■ **Nostalgia & Comics**, 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon - Thurs 9.15 - 5.45, Fri + Sat 9.15 - 6.00 (imp, back, merch, gn, ind, s-p, u/g, Brit, STO) 021 643 0143

■ **Outer Limits**, 4 The Broadway, Bedford, MK40 2TH. Tues-Sat 9-6, Mon 9-8. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, videos) 0234 358581

■ **Outer Limits**, 12 King Street, Luton LU1 2DP. Mon-Sat 9 - 6; Thurs late night until 8. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, videos) 0582 422082

■ **Outer Limits**, 43 Kettering Road, Northampton. Mon-Sat 10.00 -6.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, videos) 0604 601555

■ **Planet X**, 5 London Road, Worcester. Fri-Sat only 10-6 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, STO-monthly) Phone/fax: 0905 355055

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Virgin**, Virgin Megastore, 1st Floor, 98 Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6SX. Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 9-6; Tues 9.30-6; Thurs 9-8. (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit, tv film & fantasy bks, gn, merch, STO) 021 236 5735 fax: 021 236 8153

■ **Time Zone**, 12 Fish Street (off Butcher Row), Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1UR. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00. (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, RPG) 0743 365192

■ **Zoom Comics!!**, Unit 3 Inshops Centre, 65 South Parade, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1QX. Mon-Sat 9.00-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 021 354 7500

NORTH WEST

■ **Arcadia Comics** , 12 Clarence Arcade, Stamford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7PT. (next to Comet). Mon-Sat 10-5.15 (imp, back, ind, horror-sf mags/bks, Dr Who, Trek, ltd merch & gn, Brit, STO, ltd toys & figures) 061 339 1816

■ **Box 5 News**, 19 Blakey Moor (near Waves), Blackburn, Lancs BB2 1LL. Mon-Sat 7am-6pm (imp, Brit, STO, g-n) 0254 698020

■ **Imagination Station**, Unit 28, Portland Shopping Centre, Botchergate, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1NT. Mon - Sat 9 - 5.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO)

■ **Odyssey 7**, 21 Hanging Ditch, Corn Exchange Buildings, Manchester M4 3ES. Mon - Sat 9.30am - 5.30pm. (imp, back, sf-fantasy-horror books, postcards, videos, badges, soundtracks, stills, LF filmbooks, Star Trek, Doctor Who) 061 832 7044

■ **Odyssey 7**, Precinct Centre, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RN. Mon - Sat 9.30am - 5.30pm (imp, back, sf-fantasy-horror novels, postcards, posters, badges, stills, LF film books, Trek, Dr Who, etc) 061 273 6666

■ **Planet Eater**, 5-7 Union Street Southport, Lancs PR9 0QF Mon - Sat: 9 - 6 Sun: 12-4 (imp, back, merch, model kits, Trek, action figures, STO) 0704 548629

■ **Sartori Comics**, The Assembly Rooms, King Street, Lancaster. Thurs-Sat 10.00 - 4.30pm (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 0524 733943 (after 6pm)

■ **Thunderbooks**, 332 Lytham Rd, Blackpool. 10-5.30 Tues, Thurs-Sat all year; Mon-Sun in season (closed Wed). Out of season open Wed, closed Sun-Mon. (imp, s-p, back, merch, ind, limited u/g, Brit, frgn, kits, gn, t-shirts, media collectors' items) 0253-48321

■ **Thunderbooks II**, 116 Friargate, Preston, Lancs. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, limited u/g, Brit, frgn, gn, kits, t-shirts, media collectors' items) 0772-204287

■ **The Time Tunnel**, 66 Edleston Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7HD. Mon - Sat 10.00am - 5.30pm excl Weds. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, model kits, toys, action figures, Doctor Who, Star Trek)

■ **Worlds Apart**, Acorn Gallery, 16 Newington (city centre), Liverpool L1 4ED. Mon - Sat (excl Wed) 10-6; Wed 12-6 (imp, back, ind, merch, s-p, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy film mags) 051 707 0839

NORTH EAST

NEW **Aardvark**, Unit 2, 6/10 Blenheim Walk, opposite Leeds University, Leeds LS2 9AQ, Yorks. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, ind, gn, STO) 0924 220729

■ **Armadillo**, 16-22 Anlaby Road, Hull, North Humberside HU1 2PA. Mon-Sat 10-6; late Thur-Fri to 8 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, u/g, STO, videos, ppbks) 0482 29787

■ **Asgard Books & Comics**, 78a Westborough, Scarborough, YO11 1TP. Mon-Sat 10-6; Sun 12-6 (imp, back, RPG, STO, video consoles, soft-hardware, discounts available) 0723 500288

■ **Books N' Comics**, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO, fantasy gn, film mags, Dr Who, Trek) 0642 249143

■ **Dells Comic Shop**, 87 Kirkgate, Bradford 1, Yorkshire. Mon-Sat 9-5 excl Wed 9- 3 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, horror masks, tv fantasy mags) 0274 390 541

■ **Hysteria Comics**, Unit 2, The Arches, Park Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS24 7PH. Mon-Sat 9-5 limp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, gn, STO, film mags) 0429 236952

■ **Nu Earth Comics**, 4 Davygate Centre, York Y01 2SU. Mon - Fri 10 - 5.30; Sat 9 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, art bks) 0904 611 461

■ **Nostalgia & Comics**, 12 Matilda, off the Moor, Sheffield, Yorkshire. Mon - Fri 10.00 - 6.00; Sat 9.15 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, original art, model kits, sf & fantasy gns, horror magazines, newspaper strip compilations) 0742 769475

■ **Odyssey**, 6 Harrison Street, off Vicar Lane, Leeds LS1 6PA. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30 (imp, back, LF film books, sf - fantasy - horror bks, posters, postcards, badges, stills, Star Trek, Doctor Who, etc) 0532 426 325

■ **Sheffield Space Centre**, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield, Yorks. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.00 excl Wed (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, gn, STO, Star Trek items) 0742 758905

■ **Skyrack Book Service**, 51 The Superstore, Merrion Centre, Leeds LS2 8LY. Yorkshire. Mon - Sat 9.30am - 5pm; excl Weds: 9.30am - 1pm. (imp, back, ind, Brit, STO, SF hbk gn & magazines - many pulps) Establ 1965.

■ **The Last Picture Show**, 40 The Lanes, The Oasis, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP. Mon-Thur 10-8, Fri 10-9, Sat 9-7, Sun 12-5. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, film-rock memorabilia) 0742 569604

WEST COUNTRY

■ **Comics & CDs**, 143 Gloucester Road, Bristol. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 7.00. (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, RPG, u/g, Brit, original art) 0272 244655

■ **Floppy Tongue Comics**, 96 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 7QY. Mon-Fri 11.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 0722 331107

NEW **Forbidden Planet**, 30 Penn St., Bristol BS1 3AS. Mon-Fri 10.00-5.30, Sat 10.00-6.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, film & tv, videos, STO) 0452 309 533

■ **The Hobbit Hole**, 9 Commercial Road, Gloucester. Mon 12-5.30; Tues-Sat 10-5.30. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, gn, STO, T-shirts, film-tv mags + merch) 0452 309 533

■ **Joy's Comics**, 25 High East Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1EZ. Mon - Sun 7.30 - 6. (imp back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn) 0305 269737 (after 6pm 833304)

■ **Kathies Comics**, 20 Market Avenue, Plymouth, PL1 1PH. Mon - Fri 9.30 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 0752 257800

■ **Maelstrom Comics**, St Nicholas Market, Corn Street, Bristol. Mon-Sat 10-5. (imp, back, s-p, small merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO)

■ **Purple Haze**, 58 Eastlake Walk, Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL1 1BX (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 0752 254136

■ **Wonderworld**, 803 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH7 6AP. Tues-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, FRPG & miniatures, Games Workshop specialist stockist) 0202 422 964

■ **Wonderworld**, 25 Albert Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 3SQ. Tues-Sat 10-2, 3-6. (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, gn, STO, FRPG & miniatures) 0705 833 272

ISLE OF WIGHT

■ **Astounding Comics**, 61 Pyle Street, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1UL. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, videos) 0983 525320

WALES

■ **Cardiff Fantasy Centre**, 1st Floor, Jacobs Market, West Canal Wharf, Cardiff. Sats only 9.30-5 (imp, back s-p, merch, ind, gn, STO, videos; establ 12 yrs) 0222 563005

■ **Comix Shoppe**, 13 Shoppers Walk, Swansea SA1 3AY. Mon-Fri 10-5, Sat 10-5.30. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, film/tv mags, RPG, Games Workshop stockists) 0792 642097

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 5 Duke Street, Cardiff. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30 excl Thurs 10.00 - 6.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, frgn, gn, STO) 0222 228885

■ **Journey into Mystery**, The Emporium, 34 Castle Arcade, Cardiff. Tues - Fri 11.00 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, gn, STO, indie records & cds)

■ **Negative Zone**, Provision Market Gallery, High Street, Newport, Gwent NP9 1DD. Mon - Sat 9.00am - 5.00pm. (imp, back, s-p, ind, gn, Brit, STO) 0633 222159

SCOTLAND

■ **The Adventure Zone**, 280 High St, Glasgow G4 0QR. Mon-Wed 9.30-6, Thurs 9.30-7, Fri-Sat 9.30-6, Sun 10-5 (imp, back, ind, Brit, u/g, STO, frgn, s-p, s-f bks, tv-related supplies, videos, models, memorabilia, Who, Trek, etc 041-946 7607 (after 7pm)

NEW **All Winners**, 27 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh EH1 2QG. Mon -Sat 10-5.30; Sun 1-5 (trading card specialists: sport & non-sport + mags) 031 226 2774

■ **Black Hole Comic Shop**, The Market Hall, Wellgate Centre, Dundee. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, u/g, STO) 0382 21037

■ **City Centre Comics**, 31-35 Parnie St, Glasgow G1. Mon-Sat 10.00-5.30, Sun 12-5. (back issues only) 041 552 6692 or 041-632 2786 after 6pm

■ **Earth 2 Comics**, Argyle Shopping Centre, 28 Argyle St, Glasgow G2 8AD. Mon-Fri 10.00-5.00; Sat 10-5.30. (back, gn, ind, merch) 041-647 6810 (after 6pm)

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 2 - 3 Teviot Place, Edinburgh, EH1 2QZ. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30, excl Thurs till 6.30. (imp, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, gn, STO) 031-225 8613

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 168 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon - Wed 10 - 5.30; Thurs + Fri 10 - 6; Sat 10 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, Brit, gn, STO) 041 331 1215

■ **Future Shock**, 89 Byres Road, Partick, Glasgow G11. Mon-Sat 10-6; Sun 1-5 (imp, back, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, SF & horror gn & hbk, film bks & mags, artwork, jewellery) 041 339 8184

■ **Kaos Komics and Kollectables**, 19 Diamond Street, Aberdeen AB1 1QU. Mon-Sat 10-6; Thurs till 8; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit, gn, STO, jewellery, crystals, t-shirts) 0224 620212

■ **Plan 9 Comics**, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen AB1 1NE. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30 (Thurs till 8), Sun 1 - 5. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG specialist, board games, figures, STO) 0224 624467

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Virgin**, 28-32 Union Street, Glasgow, G2 7LZ. Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat 9-6; Tues 9.30-6; Thurs 9-7; Sun 12-5.30. (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, gn, STO) 041 221 2915; Fax 041 221 2916

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Dark Horizons**, 30a Chichester Street, Belfast BT1 4LD (near City Hall) Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, subculture, film mags) 0232-233808

■ **Talisman Comics**, 47 Winetavern Street, Belfast BT1 1JQ Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 0232-438744

CHANNEL ISLANDS

■ **Music & Video Exchange**, 11a La Motte Street, St Helier, Jersey. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00 (back, ind, Brit, u/g, records, videos, hi-fi) 0534 36606

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As such, the opinions stated do not necessarily reflect those of the publication, and space will be given in subsequent issues to opposing views. Editing of accepted manuscripts will be done only as a matter of grammar, clarity and space consideration.

In defense of Neil Gaiman, Take One

Comment by Julian Eales, Raunds, Northants

WELL, it was bound to happen eventually. The Neil Gaiman backlash has started. But the reason for me writing is because of the backlash instigator, Arthur Ranson (*Ranson Notes*, **Comics International** #38).

Not the first name you would think of when drawing up a list of professional stone throwers. No offence intended to Arthur, but it's like being savaged by your Dad. I know that from an editorial point of view, his column is a godsend. An article from a fellow professional belittling the writing ability of one of the most lauded comic creators at the moment, is just guaranteed to fill the postbag with Gaimanites frothing at the mouth.

Arthur is the first to mention this. The tone of the piece is very apologetic, as if Ranson is embarrassed to have to be the one to inform us that the Emperor has no clothes. Arthur tempers his venomous little digs with faint praise at every turn.

As an overview of the way creators have changed their way of working, it is an excellent and informative piece of journalism, but as an attack on Gaiman, it falls flat. To boil down his critique, it becomes as follows:

1) "Gaiman is a self-publicist". We never did that before? This is a bad thing? One can extrapolate from this that Ranson either believes that artists should toil away in isolation or that Gaiman is a raging egotist. If the latter is true, then Gaiman must also be credited with being a great actor as well. Whenever I have had the pleasure of meeting him, aside from the man of mystery persona, I found him to be very quiet and thoughtful. No axes to grind or drums to bang. Unless he has another face to show to fellow creators, I don't buy it, Arthur. This is a writer who is in the enviable position of being able to tailor each script to the strengths of each artist. Not the sign of an egotist.

2) "Gaiman does not tell stories, just bits and pieces". Arthur uses **Sandman** alone as the evidence for this. Because Gaiman crams many disparate ideas into the brew of **Sandman** each segment viewed alone may seem unconnected.

But we are talking about an immortal character with the whole of time and creation to roam over. Is it a crime to want to explore different aspects of the canvas he has created for that very purpose?

Sandman is a monthly series. Each story must stand on its own, as well as being part of a whole. To my mind, **Sandman** has extremely tight continuity.

3) The assertion that the cement holding **Sandman** together is thicker than the surrounding stories. It is true that sometimes one can see that Gaiman has written an unmemorable segment in order to fuel the bigger story. It also creates an uneasy mood in the reader that even the Endless cannot escape the machinations of fate.

It was inevitable that Gaiman would be victim to a backlash at some point. Journalism now revolves around the *build them up — knock them down* philosophy. It has been applied before to Alan Moore, Image Comics, Grant Morrison, Jim Shooter, Di and Fergie, Graham Taylor and numerous others.

Arthur says he feels he could be in the minority. Quite right too. Sorry, Dad.

En garde, Art!

Comment by Igor Goldkind, Artemus Communications, London

At the risk of turning **Comics International** into the British version of **The Comics Journal**, I would like the opportunity to address some of Arthur Ranson's opinions (*Ranson Notes*, **Comics International** #38) concerning Neil Gaiman. Before I answer his comments I would like to lay my credential down as they pertain to Arthur Ranson and Neil Gaiman, for the benefit of the **Comics International** readers who (although I'm sure appreciate a good cat fight), may not be completely familiar with the cast of characters and their relationships.

Arthur Ranson is, I believe, one of Britain's finest comic artists. His fine line photo-realism is a definitive style in comics illustration and I will always visualise Judge Anderson as Arthur's Judge Anderson.

I also have known Arthur Ranson personally to be a warm, self-effacing individual with the kind of insightful sense of humour that we Americans would trade a million EuroDisneys for.

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expressed in his last column is a mystery to me; in fact it has reminded me in general of how much a mystery human nature is.

I have been following Arthur's monthly column with a mixture of interest and concern. Interest, because Arthur has never before, to my knowledge, set himself up in a vocal corner of the industry. I always imagined Arthur to be one of those artists who are so busy producing brilliant illustrations that they don't have time to spout platitudes onto the pages of industry papers; unlike PR men.

Concern, because in several of his past columns I have detected a certain ambling gait to Arthur's arguments. I have found them sincere and sometimes passionate, but also somewhat naive as well as downright ignorant in specific areas; particularly when Arthur addresses himself to the basics of publishing and marketing. But if writing about things that only one half knew anything about was a crime, our prisons would be full of journalists. No, what concerned me, which I expressed to Dez Skinn several months ago, was that Arthur, although perfectly entitled to his opinion and perfectly entitled to display his ignorance and naivety in public, was slipping dangerously close to saying something really stupid.

I think last month's column not only slipped, but slid and skidded headlong into complete moronism. I'm sorry Arthur, you're a nice man and I have tremendous respect for your creative skills, but when it comes to evaluating Neil Gaiman, you don't know your arse from your elbow. For the benefit of **Comics International** readers who may detect personal feelings on the line as regards Neil Gaiman, I would like to confirm your suspicions: I met Neil Gaiman nearly nine years ago, I know Neil Gaiman as a person and as a writer. Neil Gaiman is a friend of mine; and yes, Arthur, you are no Neil Gaiman.

As a person, Neil Gaiman is one of the most generous and compassionate individuals I have ever met. An easy eulogy to express, but in the same way the "love" has been trivialised by countless pop lyrics, a difficult phrase to write when you take on board most people's cynical postures. To anyone who knows Neil beyond their own prejudices against black leather jackets and dark glasses, a truer statement could not be made regarding him. I have observed him taking pains to bring an unknown artist or writer to the attention of one of his editors. I have seen him navigate unswervingly between the fields of comics, SF, fantasy and the so-called mainstream, breaking down barriers, pointing out common ground and generally acting as an articulate spokesperson for the comics industry.

His comics writing apart, the industry as a whole owes Neil a debt of gratitude for the positive image he has projected on its behalf. Does anyone remember that Neil Gaiman was once a prolific journalist who got Judge Dredd on the cover of **Time Out** for the very first time, before a comics fan became editor? Does anyone remember that Neil spent months lobbying the SF establishment to get a graphic novel category for the 1987 World Science Fiction Convention; and that he lobbied equally hard to ensure that **Watchmen** win that category? Does anyone remember that Neil has been from the beginning, a tireless promoter of the comics medium to the mainstream?

This is not to say that Neil hasn't been tirelessly promoting himself and his work; which seems to be the sticking bone in the throat of Arthur's attack. Oh deary, deary me. What an unforgivable sin. That mean Mr Gaiman has gone out and hustled himself work. That callous, self-interested Mr Gaiman has gone and told everyone that he's a fine writer and should be employed. That shylock Gaiman has gone out and harassed editors to secure commissions to write comics and make money. The bastard. How dare he call himself a comics writer. How dare he make loads of money writing comics, short stories, novels and film scripts. After all, he only wrote two *Future Shocks* before getting his first DC commission. How dare he not write a five part *Robo-Hunter* before taking the plunge. How dare he be successful!

Because that's what Neil is, Arthur: successful. Neil Gaiman has made himself a major success through the sweat of his brow, dripping off his dark glasses.

There are many negative American traits and I am usually the first in line to list them; one negative English trait I am aware of is an intolerance of self-made success. (Note that I say English trait; I have yet to detect it as strongly amongst the Irish; or the Scots, for that matter). Why the English are quick to damn anyone who toots their own horn or achieves a self-determined success is a sociological issue too broad to address here.

Of course, self made success is integral to the American identity. Which may be part of the reason Neil chooses to live there; I don't really know. I do know that the British comics industry has its own unspoken hierarchy, pecking order and rituals of passage that are as pathetic and antiquated as the public school system. Or the Oxbridge-style faggotry that pervades the government, the business sector and the media, for that matter.

Self-effacement is an overrated virtue at best, but when one effaces others out of jealousy or resentment because they haven't followed "the rules", it's down right ugly.

To set the record straight, I do not think that Neil Gaiman is the greatest comics writer ever to grace the glossy pages of a deluxe DC mini-series. Sorry Neil, you can't wear that T-shirt yet. I think Gaiman's early writing was flawed at best. I find his current output a mixed bag. I have only ever found every third issue of **Sandman** worthy of the hype and adulation.

On the other hand, **Good Omens** (Neil Gaiman's collaborative novel with Terry Pratchett), was the only book with Pratchett's name on it I could finish without heading to the loo with my hand over my mouth. It's hilarious and well worth the read

in a kind of sub-Douglas Adams way.

These are matters of taste, in this case my own. The important issue (and my basic point of contention with Arthur) is the reason I have been reading Gaiman's work from the beginning and will continue to do so: he is in the genuine meaning of the word, an artist. Not a hack, not a hustler, not a fake, but a creative voice who is trying to express something real to his audience as well as entertain them. I don't spell artist with a capital A. Anyone who has read biographies of artists like Picasso, Joyce, Oliver, Chaplin, Houdini, Nureyev (the list is endless) knows that the role of the artist often includes that of hack, hustler and fake, not to mention illusionist and flawed egotist.

Why do we expect our artists to spring virginal and completely formed from a magic fountain of creative purity? Why can't we understand that creativity *is* process? For those who don't know it, the only way to become a good comics writer is practice and more practice; talent has never been enough. It is the burden of the comics writer that his or her practice and development always takes place in public.

Comics artists can spend endless hours sketching, honing their craft in the privacy of their studio. Writers only fully realise the resolution of their work, for good or bad, in print.

Gaiman is not only a genuine talent (who else in comics delivers the simple clarity and authenticity of children's dialogue that Gaiman has, again and again?). He is also a growing artist who improves with each new work. Just read the backlist from **Violent Cases** onwards to chart his progress.

Gaiman doesn't just passively happen to improve with time, he actively struggles to hone his expression. At the end of the day an artist (there's that word again), is a bricklayer; sweating to get one brick fixed to another using whatever personal mortar is available. In my book, Gaiman is one of the better bricklayers around.

Arthur claims that Gaiman's prose is a collage of other influences. Well excuse me Arthur, do I need to point out your influences? Jesus Arthur, who is it that you are comparing Gaiman to who has provided a body of work in comics (or any other genre) without influence? I'd like to meet them. I'd like to shake their hand and ask them what planet they come from and if their intentions on Earth are benevolent. What you cannot see through your rancour Arthur, is that although Gaiman's work may not be to your taste, he is a hard-working, developing writer worthy of the kind of respect and consideration I would like to think professional colleagues hold for each other in this industry. The short-sightedness of your attack on Neil the writer and the person, demeans you and comes perilously close to the schoolyard pettiness that has kept this industry stuck in its creative adolescence for far too long.

I would like to thank Arthur, however, for giving me the opportunity finally to voice the suppressed anger I have accumulated over eight years of hearing otherwise respectable individuals denigrate themselves by gratuitously slagging Neil off for no better motive than jealousy.

Who are you to protect us with your tastes? If Neil Gaiman is really the talentless sham hustler you paint him to be, then it's OK, Dad, we'll figure it out.

Snuff: the final word?

Comment by Shaun Dixon, Berwick-on-Tweed

WHILE I am fairly certain that you only printed Alex Thomas's *Comment* (**Comics International** 37) to provoke a rabid response, I find myself rising to the bait.

I am unable to resist the temptation to endeavour to decipher his rather disjointed missive and reply to some of the points raised therein.

His most ludicrous statement was undoubtedly the one laying claim to the "beauty of the concept of the snuff movie." Leaving aside the possibility that he was using irony, which I must admit I was unable to detect, I would love to hear his defense of this claim?

Perhaps in his smug world, where everyone can be divided into oh-so-hilarious categories, violent death, in the name of profit or otherwise, is beautiful. However, I can assure you that this has no basis in reality and such an attitude borders on the criminally deranged.

Nor are the perpetrators of such crimes beautiful, conceptually or otherwise. Here, at least, I am speaking from harsh experience, having served time in B Hall at Saughton Prison.

This is notorious as one of the worst halls in the entire Scottish Prison Service. It is, basically, a dumping ground for all manner of troublesome convicts thus allowing a relatively minor offender such as myself the dubious chance to mix with multiple murderers, rapists and child pornographers.

Rest assured, Mr. Thompson, beauty is totally lacking from this blighted place. I met people who had slaughtered and dismembered people, who had let people drown in their own blood and people who had raped and murdered children repeatedly.

It isn't hard to organise a brief spell of imprisonment if you really are keen enough. In fact, get into debt whilst incarcerated and you will assuredly get to star in a "conceptually beautiful" production of your own, minus camera. So let's hear no more crap about the merits of snuff movies, they have none, period.

As to their existence, well, I am in no position to pronounce grandly as Mr. Thomas does. I feel, however, that eventually such an item will surface. Primary cause will be the increasing availability of camcorders. I think that they will be more likely to surface as

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70	FN/VF	9.50
74	VF	11.00
102	FN	27.50

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22	FN+	11.00
36	VF	8.00
39	VF-	7.50

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8	VF(bk cvr nic)	32.00
14	VF-	16.00
21	FN+	8.50
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98	FN-	21.00
106	VF/NM	30.00
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117	FN	14.00
118	VF-	18.00
123	FN+	14.00
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Ann 1	FN+ (1965)	37.50

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49	FN	36.00
50	VF+	40.00
51	VF+	35.00
52	FN+	34.00
53	VF/NM	45.00
54	VG/FN	13.50
55	VF	24.00
56	VF	24.00
57	FN+	42.00
58	VF	70.00
60	VF	40.00
86	VF	9.00
89	VF	9.00
97	VF	9.00

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37	VG+	37.50
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44	VF	75.00
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49	VF	58.00
51	FN-	18.00
52	G+	6.00
55	FN+	21.00
57	VF+	42.00
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92	VF+ (tiny bk tr)	19.00
93	NM-	27.50

THOR

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134	VF	24.00
138	VF+	19.00
146	NM	15.00
150	VF+	12.50
158	VF-	22.50
159	VF	10.00
162	VF	14.00
165	VF	22.00
Ann 2	VF	20.00

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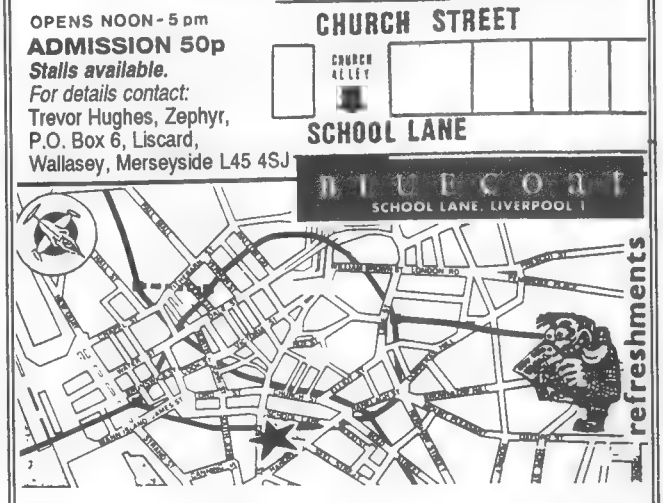

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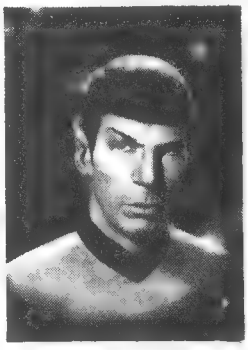

evidence in a murder trial than in the mass-market however. There is plenty of evidence, well documented, of murderers taking pictures of their grisly handiwork, so the advance of technology will inevitably surface in such a manner.

I also find his patronising categorisation of people both insulting and puerile. In fact, I find his f**king holier-than-thou elitism enough to really raise my blood pressure. So what if comic fans like Goth music, Thrash metal, Star Trek, anoraks, leather trousers, **Cherry Poptart** or **Sandman**? Who is the pompous Mr. Thomas to attribute reasons for peoples' purchases based on his own observations?

Still, he does seem to know rather a lot about secretly buying material of a sexual nature. Speaking from experience?

I'll finish my fulminations with that old cliche about how it would be a dull old world if everyone was the same.

On second thoughts, I'll finish with a couple of categorisations of my own to save Mr. Thomas's obviously tired brain: Me, ex-convict comic collector, intolerant of bigots, buys **Sandman** because he likes it; Mr Thomas, pompous, intolerant asshole who should try living in the real world.

The buggo vocal minority

***Comment* by Gillian Jaysmith, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent**

I'M A self-confessed woman, one of those strange animals with breasts the size of Saturn and a line in wit which would make your toes curl.

With my better perspective on life I can put a prat like **Shade The Changing Man** in his place, and I'm probably also tribad and a few other things. I'm also somewhat disconcerted by the monotony and bitterness in the *Comment* column. Hey ho, comics are fascist, Image is crap, speculators are a pain in the butt (but luckily none of you are speculators, er, right?) and let's not forget the case for criminalising the words 'graphic novel'.

Can't anyone think of anything positive to say about comics? Is the only way to be published to call every other correspondent in the last six months a spineless, stupid ignoramus with an amateur streak and probably a small willy too? I guess that's what you get when over-18 amateurs discuss something professional. Every opinion which comes along is either deeply tedious or immediately refuted by a cascade of professional outrage. James Hamilton, where are you now? Warren Zajac, will you show your head in public again?

This is actually going to be a *Comment* rather than a *Whinge*, and like I say, the first point is: where's the positive element? Let me emphasise that I don't want to talk about Positive Thinking, but there's positive and there's positive. Dez Skinn has done his bit for comics by providing a place for you to talk. But what do I read each month? Inventive invective and adjective after adjective, declaring that one thing or another doesn't meet your satisfaction. Grateful I'm sure to know your point of view, but unless you do something influential - or are someone influential - you words are corkingly valueless.

Critics of speculators ignore their benefits; critics of fascist superheroes ignore the irony, which is sometimes easy to do; critics of 'casual browsers' ignore the fact that comics shops may get a raw deal, but if it wasn't profitable most of the time, I can't believe even the most comic-loving altruist would run one (and don't forget those beautiful speculators - presumably the £800 they spend on single issues isn't thrown on the fire).

Come on! The circulation of this magazine is how many thousands? Why is it only the depressed 0.1% which ever writes in?

Dave Sim recently took his optimism out on tour and says he had a great time. Surprisingly the same holds in comics as in most business areas: as a 'business person' I can confirm that if you approach a situation as a source of interestingly different ideas rather than as an horrendous problem, you have (a) more chance of fixing such problems, (b) more repeat custom, and (c) shedloads more fun. Oh, and (d) you don't go stark staring buggo.

But you folks seem to be in pretty full agreement that all comics readers are already stark staring buggo (except, naturally, for the handful of souls who provide 90% of *Comment*).

Perhaps I could suggest that people start rejoicing in comics, rather than staying smug in singling out the bits they don't like and trying to excise them from the medium. Even Mary Whitehouse has finally got the idea over in television land.

While most of the opinions in *Comment* may be "relevant", they offer dramatically few "solutions" to perceived "problems". Maybe this is because the problems aren't really problems, just "features", as computer programmers put it. Or maybe it's because you really don't care, you just want you name in lights under the politically correct topic of the day.

Second point: I now hypocritically turn upon Jim Graham and ask exactly what he means by his words about Rachel Pollack and what she's done to **Doom Patrol**. For your information, sunshine, some people appreciate women writing mainstream comics. Some people don't mind seeing psychological methods or transactional analysis used (for the first time in the mainstream) to examine superheroes. Self-confessed pretentious navel-gazers like you lapped it up in **Dark Knight Returns**, and you defended Azrael against Elizabeth Kasper's spirited onslaught. Isn't it enough for you to beat up on one woman in a year? Give Rachel a break.

Some people aren't bothered by different content to the norm or by a writer daring to follow in the footsteps of a big industry name. And some people aren't stimulated by kinetic art of women with globular breasts. I was told by a reader of **Comic World** that "the writing in **Doom Patrol** is to improve, starting from #75". Do tell.

Cliff is to be resigned as a steam engine after being blown up? (Hmm. there's a novel fate for Cliff.) I won't pass judgement until I see the issue in question, but, gee, I mean I'm only a woman but I don't quite see how the same author's writing can improve as of a particular issue. This implies some metric of quality based on the general plotline, which presumably means as I've idolised Thomas Pynchon I've only been deceiving myself.

Meanwhile, if Jim Graham wants to make something of it, he is welcome at my listed address, where, using only bare knuckles and a convincing southpaw, I shall demonstrate how excellent Rachel Pollack's writing really is. This may sound gruesome but it's just as valid stance as his. "I don't like it," he says, and his argument consists of comparing Pollack with Morrison, using his predisposition towards the latter as the whole of his case. Perhaps he'd like to compare Van Gogh against Caravaggio? Or cancer against malaria? Male logic - it can prove anything.

In general, anyone with a specific axe to grind about a specific writers or artist ought to try writing or drawing for themselves. The only reason I write to Vertigo is to discuss the writing (and the stupid letters) since I am a writer myself and I feel professionally qualified to enter the agora, something definitely true about art since I can't draw. I willingly paid for it: I should shut up about it. For the most part, people advocating one thing or another in comics have already bought into the existing system. Peculiar as it may sound, I think this diminishes, not enhances your right to complain. It doesn't affect your right to alter and rebuild from within, provided you have a cause and a case (as opposed to a fun fun axe to grind). But if you want to complain about writing, I suggest you give it a go, sunshine, and let me take a look at the consequences. I'll be positive, I promise. Rol and Fabio and various others have bitten the bullet and tried to prove themselves, insofar as Artistic labour needs to prove itself to self-appointed Commentators and Critics. Where's the Jim Graham Vertigo title?

From now on, could each critic please submit a sample of original writing or art with each review or *Comment* submission? Anyone producing six or more scripts per month over a twelve-month period can have an authentic *Gerard Jones Is Nothing But A Mindless Hack - Honest!* trophy. Meanwhile, I hope I never have to deal with some of you deliciously open-minded people in your daylight careers. There's positive for you.

The voice of the deaf

***Comment* by Fabio P Barbieri, Leyton, London**

I NEVER in my life read a more prize and textbook instance of a closed mind than Neil Madle (*Comment*, **Comics International** #38). His whole article rages with a positive passion not to know, not to see, not to allow himself to be shown, what is going on around him. if he's not a Tory, he sure sounds like one. Does he come from Tunbridge Wells? No; from Wiltshire... close enough.

Come to London some time, Mr Madle, sir, and smell the coffee. To those of us who can't afford country seats, the very notion that anybody might be bored by being told that the homeless exist and there are plenty of them, is simply obscene. Walk the streets, look at the people.

And then reflect on this habit of yours to sneer at "bores". Nothing is more odious about a certain kind of English than their constant use of boredom as a defense against argument. It makes it impossible to reason the close-minded English person into doing anything useful, good, or just. They are too busy staring at the "bore".

Alex Thomas never said that all comic fans, or even a majority of them, belong to his three dangerous categories; so Madle's long rant about how he's not a pervert is off the point. Thomas just said that such species exist. Why did Neil Madle take this statement personally — especially since it seems from his comment that he is not familiar with the sort of person Thomas described? Why is Neil Madle so angry when somebody points to the strange attitudes of some fans? What's he afraid of admitting?

I once took an intelligent, open-minded, non-smoking vegetarian left-wing liberal university student friend of mine to a UKCAC. He remarked at the end of the day that I was the most normal-looking person he had seen all day long. No doubt he exaggerated, but...

London's largest store is chock-a-block with tattoo mags, rubber and PVC mags, underground horror movie fanzines, bondage, S&M and monstrously expensive continental porn. I have seen there, exposed for sale, the Italian magazine **Diva**, a magazine that is not about sex as such, but about sadomasochism, bondage, incest, necrophilia and bestiality. Another store, in Camden Town, advertises "subculture" publications — which, being examined, prove to mean pervert's fanzines.

But when the mainstream offers **Lobo**, **Terminator**, and other murderous rubbish indiscriminately, this is not even surprising. What need of "snuff" movies (which do exist — want to talk to the Argentinean police torturers who made a profitable sideline in retailing video recordings of the torture and murder of left-wing female students back in the '70s?) when Hollywood provides all the perverts' delights we could wish, and S&M gear — chains, rubber, dog collars, rings, tattoos — is becoming fashionable?

This, Mr Madle sir, is the world we live in, and it does nobody any good to deny it. Of course, this is not the whole story; but your obstinacy in denying these aspects of our experience is foolish. If you wish to make yourself deaf to the sound of daily life, at least don't give voice to your defense.

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COMMENT EXTRA

The hypocrisy of Dave Sim as a retailers' ally

Trade comment by Lou Bank, Marvel/Dark Horse

In ***Comics International*** *38, we published an abridged version of the trade talk given at the 1993 UK Comic Art Convention by Dave Sim, publisher/creator of* ***Cerebus****.*

Being Marvel's key marketing liaison with the direct market over the last several years, Lou Bank requested the following space as a right to reply to what he believes to be an incorrect

Re: *Comment Extra*, **Comics International #38**: Dave Sim on the need for a retailers' organisation.

There is nothing more beneficial to a group of small businesses than a retail collective. The forum created to exchange workable ideas, impressions of upcoming product and even hard, unsold goods is invaluable to the concern too undercapitalized to get, pardon the expression, professional help. However, that having been said, anyone who's been in business for any real period of time knows that.

"Rebel without a clue..."

The title of Sim's UKCAC trade day keynote speech might lead one to believe that Sim had something meritorious to add to the subject. Upon reading the published version I found Sim to be nothing more than Rebel Without a Clue.

In his first two paragraphs it appears he believes in the strength of the status quo. To quote, "The reason that [the direct market's] efforts to change the perception of comic books as a bastardized children's medium have been so successful...is the simplicity of the rules governing the movement and exchange of goods and currency and strict adhesion to the rules". He then carries on to describe those rules, including the "successful" factor that comics are sold non-returnable. It is inherent in his schematic, however, that "individual stores order wisely and cautiously". All else remaining equal, he ends, "the supply line remains open and all levels of the direct market prosper and flourish".

Breaking the rules

Sim appears to be coiling in these first two paragraphs, and in the third paragraph the Wise Old Man of Comics makes his first lunge. He jumps on Valiant for breaking the rules with **Turok** 1 and Image-Malibu for doing so with numerous Image comics. The broken rule? The former publisher shipped erroneously solicited merchandise, the latter shipped merchandise beyond the allowable 90 day shipping window, and in both cases, as Sim puts it, "No provision was made for retailer return."

I couldn't agree with him more. This is, for obvious reasons, a problem, and I wouldn't want to be in a retailer's shoes in situations like these. And that's why Marvel Comics, as well as, I believe, DC Comics, have made it policy that comics shipped 30 days past the point of solicitation, or shipped in a form markedly different from that solicited, are fully returnable.

At this point, however, Sim makes the jump from these two publishers' breaking of the rules as somehow citing, to quote, the "fundamental flaw and vulnerability in the Direct Market...[that] the retailer takes all the risks." However, as Sim himself made clear earlier, the flaw in the direct market is when the rules are broken, ergo the flaw here is not in the fact that retailers are ordering comics on a non-returnable basis but rather that the publishers in question have not shipped the product as promised and have not offered due compensation to the retailers as per the stipulated "rules" of the direct market. It's important to remember that point, not only for reasons which I'll get to immediately but also for a fun little game of tag I'll play further on in this letter.

Potentially enormous costs

The flaw, as anyone can plainly see, is that Valiant and Image/Malibu didn't live up to their part of the agreement, which is to ship product as solicited and in a timely manner. Had the two publishers done so, retailers wouldn't have been stuck with any unsold copies. Full stop. Now, one could argue of the quite potentially enormous costs of a) carrying stock while enduring the normal returns period; b) negative cash flow; and c) the shipping of the returned product back to the distributor. As well, there are ramifications that will be seen in consumer budgeting that could result in unsold copies of other titles due to the late-shipping problem, and those titles surely aren't returnable. But that's not the issue here. At least not yet.

Sim's next point is that "the only information available to the retailer is the *Diamond* and *Capital City* top 100 charts and these lists reflect orders alone." Actually, Dave, **Comics International** also provides to UK retailers the sales charts for *Titan* and *First Choice*, and while this may seem inconsequential, it's quite important. If you compare the four charts you'll see something very interesting: they're different. Very different. And why is that? Because different regions have different ordering patterns, and that's because different stores have different ordering patterns. So what's the point? A Top 100 listing is of no use to anyone but the very newest retailer. Once a retailer has been in business for four months his or her own particular ordering pattern will be established through cycle-sheeting or whatever various method is used in that store for tracking sales as opposed to orders.

See, Dave, what you don't seem to realise is that stores have to order product based on their own sales history. When John's Comics is placing orders for December shipping comics, those orders are based on sales actually made in that store over the prior several months. The Top 100 list is interesting because it may show you that, nationally, you sold or ordered a greater percentage of copies of **Cerebus** than your fellow retailer, but it's not going to give you an idea of what to order in the future better than your own hard data. Top 100 lists can be easily misinterpreted; actual money spent by little Joey in your store can be misinterpreted, too, but not nearly as easily.

"Sim is stupid"

The Next Stroke of Brilliance is that "a new title which appears on the list at number seven or ten based on the number of copies ordered is often responsible for an across-the-board loss of thousands of dollars or pounds at the retail level. If a sell-through index existed, it could reflect actual sales." The two statements are strung together for one of two possible reasons. The first is that Sim is stupid; the second, as with before, I'll get to soon.

A sell-through index, by virtue of its very nature, could not exist until well after the first issue of a comic has shipped. It's simply impossible. And by the time the list could be compiled a retailer would already be ordering four issues down the line. Further, you would again see anomalies by region which would negatively affect a store's profitability if he were to follow the information exactly. Again, a retailer's own hard data cannot be replaced by such a beast. In essence, by counting remaining stock as compared to units ordered, a retailer has his own "sell-thru index" by which he creates his monthly orders.

The Sherlock Holmes of the Comic Set then deduces that such a national ranking doesn't exist because "it is in the interest of the larger companies and the large distributors to fool retailers into buying unsaleable comic books." I love this! This is Sim at his best, playing to the paranoid with all the conspiracy he can muster!

The Apocalypse Scenario

Okay, Dave, you caught us! What Marvel and DC really want to do is trick the retailers into ordering so much unsaleable product that they can't stay in business. Then, when they start dropping like flies, the distributors (who only think they're in cahoots with us!) will find themselves short when bill time comes. Then...now follow me here, it may get tricky for you...they'll stop paying the little guys, like Aardvark-Vanaheim and hopefully that upstart Dark Horse. Those pathetic little publishers will begin to drop at, we approximate, roughly the same time that the distributors are forced to close some of their smaller branches due to a continued high overhead and ever-dropping sales of bad comics. Pretty soon, everyone will wake up to find that the distributors are so far into debt with Marvel and DC that Terry Stewart and Paul Levitz will pick through the remains and divide up what's left. ("No, Paul, I get *Diamond*, you get *Capital*.) Then they can begin to rebuild the empire from scratch, the way it was meant to be! Get real, Sim! Did you breast-feed from Oliver Stone? It does no one any good if retailers are sitting with unsold product. See, this profit-motive trickles all the way down the line. The Big Guys don't want to see this any more than the actual affected retailers. The Apocalypse Scenario presented is reason enough that Marvel doesn't even like to see unsold Image books!

"Wrong, wrong, wrong!"

The next bit of genius explains that retailers are...well, let Sim explain: "If retailers have to order a complete storyline, an over-priced graphic novel or a series of over-priced annuals before retailers are able to see how much or little interest there is in them on the part of retail customers, then retailers are apt

to order them in larger quantities." Wrong, wrong, wrong! And in so many ways!

First off, if we felt it was a detriment to allow retailers to gauge consumer reaction to our products prior to placing orders we would have stopped distributors from producing consumer catalogs a long time ago. Legally, they can't reproduce our catalog without our approval; crazy little thing called copyright! And if you added together the cost of all the advertising placed by Marvel and DC in these consumer catalogs, I'm sure you'd find it more than doubled the entire gross of Aardvark-Vanaheim Publishing since its inception. Obviously, then, Dave, it's safe to say that Marvel and DC encourage preview catalogs.

Secondly, we've found that orders are almost always higher when we ship a preview of a comic prior to or during the comics solicitation. Why don't we do it more often? Generally because the material simply isn't scheduled to be done that far in advance. If anything, Sim's only just pointed out that we're not as good at marketing our titles as we could be to obtain higher orders.

And if you thought I was done there...you know, it really confuses me that Sim could believe sell-through information on "an over-priced graphic novel" is going to do anything to change any orders on any product. They're one shots, Dave! You don't order a second, third or fourth issue! Get with the program!

Better track records

And in the same paragraph, after the Master has so ingeniously deduced that Marvel and DC are gathering sell-through information because "If they know what fooled you last year then they will know how to fool you next year," he follows with "On a percentage basis their track record is pitiful." Oh, I see, Dave! The enemy is devilishly crafty, but inherently stupid! What the hell percentage basis are you talking about? Got news for you, Dave, Marvel and DC have better track records than Aardvark-Vanaheim at producing successful comics; by the way, when are you producing the next issue of **Neil the Horse**?

If I'm not boring everyone reading this already, I'm certainly boring myself. But bear with me; the good stuff is coming soon!

Sim makes the assumption (hang on, we're going for another leap here!) that the reason **Turok** 1 wasn't made returnable was because too few retailers complained about it. Hey, John Hartz, is that true?! Not bloody likely! I know Sim attended the trade show circuit last year; I saw him. Did he not talk business with retailers? They all told me they were stuck with this book or that book. If he contends that retailers won't talk about ordering mistakes because "they feel themselves to be stupid, failures or incompetent," it's for one simple reason: He's a manipulative politician.

One retailer asking for returns or one hundred fifty retailers asking for returns; there's little difference. If a publisher isn't going to make something returnable, the only way to change his mind is through manipulating his profit-motive. By suggesting that you may not order his comics in the future.

The A-V by-pass

If you still don't follow this idea, Dave, let me give you an example. Let's pretend that you're going to produce a collection of **Cerebus** comics in trade paperback form. You decide that you're only going to sell these trade paperbacks directly to the consumers through ads placed in your own comics. The profit margin, you reason, is higher, and you've got a fairly consistent audience who is dedicated. Now let's say that a bunch of retailers call you. Perhaps they explain that the only reason you have those dedicated readers is because of the work they did to build your comic. Maybe you decide to sell them copies of your trade paperback, but only directly through you, and only at a slight discount. That's the profit-motive in you, Dave; if this scenario really played out, you would sell them copies because you wouldn't want them to stop supporting your comic.

Now, on to the next level, a distributor might call you and say, "Hey, Dave, we've always supported your comic and highlighted it as an example of what can be done in comics today." Interesting, but no, let's pretend that's not enough. You decide to hold out because that chunk of the profit is too tasty to give up. Then the distributor might call back and say, "Gosh, Dave, we simply don't have the space any longer to give **Cerebus** the high visibility we have in the past." At that point, Dave, you might break down and actually sell such a collection to the distributors.

A full-frontal attack

Later in his article, Sim makes what I perceive to be a full-frontal assault against myself and Bob Wayne, the chief DC representative attending UKCAC. He describes what we have to say as "empty promises" and "rationalisations" and describes us as "impotent politicians." I truly wish Sim had cited us by name, rather than referring to us as DC and Marvel, because, frankly, I'd love to bring him to court and take the stuffing out of him financially. Instead, I have to settle for this little tirade.

I suggest that perhaps Sim himself is better described by the phrase "impotent politician." Dave isn't who he claims to be in his little speech; he's not the retailers little buddy with concern only for the success of their stores. Dave Sim is only concerned with his own success. He'll say anything he thinks necessary to get the retailers to pay attention to his comic. And unlike His Honor, I'll support my theory:

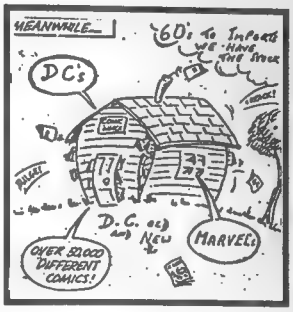
Dave has been a publisher for at least twelve years now. He, of all people, knows the start up costs of producing a comic. Creators must be paid, office space must be rented and employees must be hired before any orders are received on your first comic. He makes the statement, "Everyone shares in the successes, but the failures are for retailers alone. Retailers take the loss on them." It's not news to Dave that a small publisher can lose their entire company to a bad comic; it can't be news to him that Marvel or DC can eat losses on an unsuccessful comic due to those same start-up costs. The only reason Sim says this is he hopes to make himself look like The Retailers' Sympathetic Buddy. For a guy who never made it to college, he's got Psych 101 down flat!

Manipulative terminology

Sim infers that retailers are not "stupid, failures or incompetent" when they are stuck with unsold comics which they over-ordered. I agree with him. But I sure wouldn't say that, because to my mind that's a manipulative phrase, said only to win the trust of those retailers who may actually feel that way. This, to my mind, is example number two of how Dave Sim is simply a marketing politician. If he really cared about the retailers' financial health, why doesn't he ask the hard questions: Did you use cycle-sheets? Did you budget for anticipated expenditures for the month? Did you allow for proper rack space for additional title counts? He won't ask the questions that could likely turn a crowd of retailers against him because he isn't interested in risking his own sales and therefore his own income to make retailers more profitable. If Sim were a real person, and not some politician himself, would he feel the need to stick his nose so far up the collective retailer butt?

Sim's "call" for an industry chart of sell-through figures is laughable. First off, as pointed out earlier, it would be of relatively no use to retailers. Secondly, how do you create that, Boy Genius? Do you expect every retailer to duplicate their cycle sheets and pass them on to distributors for collation? Do either of the two

THE COMIC SHACK



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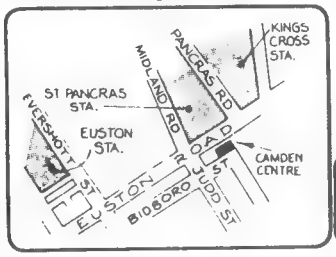

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MARCH 20th, MAY 22nd,
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parties have the time or manpower to do that? Hell, most retailers don't have time in the present state of the market to even create cycle sheets! Marvel knows that, and is vitally concerned with the retailers plight, hence the creation of the direct market bar code. That bar code is going to allow retailers to cycle sheet without spending six hours a week, pencil in hand, counting what remains on the rack. With a long term view of the industry that code was created to expedite the creation of computerized point-of-sale systems that would handle cycling automatically for retailers.

Conspiracy theories

If the magnificent Mr. Sim thought for even a moment about retailer concerns, or even, as he claims, the "long term" of the market, he'd put a damn code on his book. But instead, he spends his time creating long, drawn out conspiracy theories to prey on those retailers who are scared of a company the size of a Marvel or DC and are looking for anyone to voice their concern, however illogical.

Sim's stringing together of the sentences "a new title which appears on the list at number seven or ten based on the number of copies ordered is often responsible for an across-the-board loss of thousands of dollars or pounds at the retail level," and "If a sell-through index existed, it could reflect actual sales," is done for that very purpose of preying on already-suspicious minds. Of course both statements are true, but why string them together without a conclusion? Because there is no conclusion. A sell-through index will not prevent the tremendous losses potentially incurred against a title placing in the top ten; only sound retail ordering will prevent those losses, and prevent that title from placing in the top ten list. An index reflecting that loss after the fact does nothing more than rub the retailers' collective nose in the mistake. Only a fool can't make that logical progression, and I don't count Sim a fool; he's just playing the song everyone wants to hear.

Let me ask you a question, Sim: If you're so concerned with the profitability of retailers, and you believe that a retailer's biggest problem is getting stuck with unsold comics, then why aren't you selling **Cerebus** on a returnable basis? Put your money where your mouth is! You want to see the "greatest risks [on the] collective shoulders", then act, don't pose.

Sim has quite a bit to offer the industry at large. He began publishing before I was old enough to legally have a job. Those years of development must have taught him a great deal about marketing within a small business. For him to take that knowledge and squander it by finding ways to manipulate other small businesses is beyond reprehensible; it's like raping a your own family. But at least now we can all learn a lesson from Sim: If you're going to cast someone else in the role of the impotent politician, be sure to cover your own tracks. It's not honest but it's a damn sight more clever. I'll give him this, though: I doubt a jury of his actual peers would know whether or not he was impotent.

If there is a point to be made from Sim's piece, then it is this: the direct market as it currently operates is an enormous egg. It's tremendously large yet terribly fragile. That fragility is a reflection of the economic risk taken by under-capitalised retailers. Every month, as the title counts grow beyond the management systems put into place by retailers and beyond the actual display space available by retailers, turning in that month's catalog is more and more a gamble being played with the store being placed as the marker.

Reducing the gamble

If the market is to continue to grow, retailers must find a way to reduce the actual gamble. If that means demanding more lead time for orders from publishers in order to obtain more realistic and actual pre-orders from customers, then so be it; if that means finding the capital necessary to outfit retailers with point-of-sale operations to properly cycle and traffic stock through the store for more accurate pre-orders, then let's find it; or if that means forcing more of the financial risk onto the publisher, then force that issue. If a comics retailer organisation can go beyond being a group of marketers to a group concerned with changing the industry, then these are the ways to do that.

It's all too easy when something is not working to point the finger at someone else, and to focus on internal fighting and random accusations. But if we're to get on with business and make the best of a situation then let's focus on the issues. There's a tremendous mind-power available in the collective experiences and wisdom of the direct market retailers, distributors and publishers; let's stop squandering it amid playground bickering.

Lou Bank is between jobs, having left Marvel Comics and waiting to start with Dark Horse Comics. He's going to miss being the head-on target of the industry's most poorly-aimed tirades, but he's hoping it will allow his hair to grow back.

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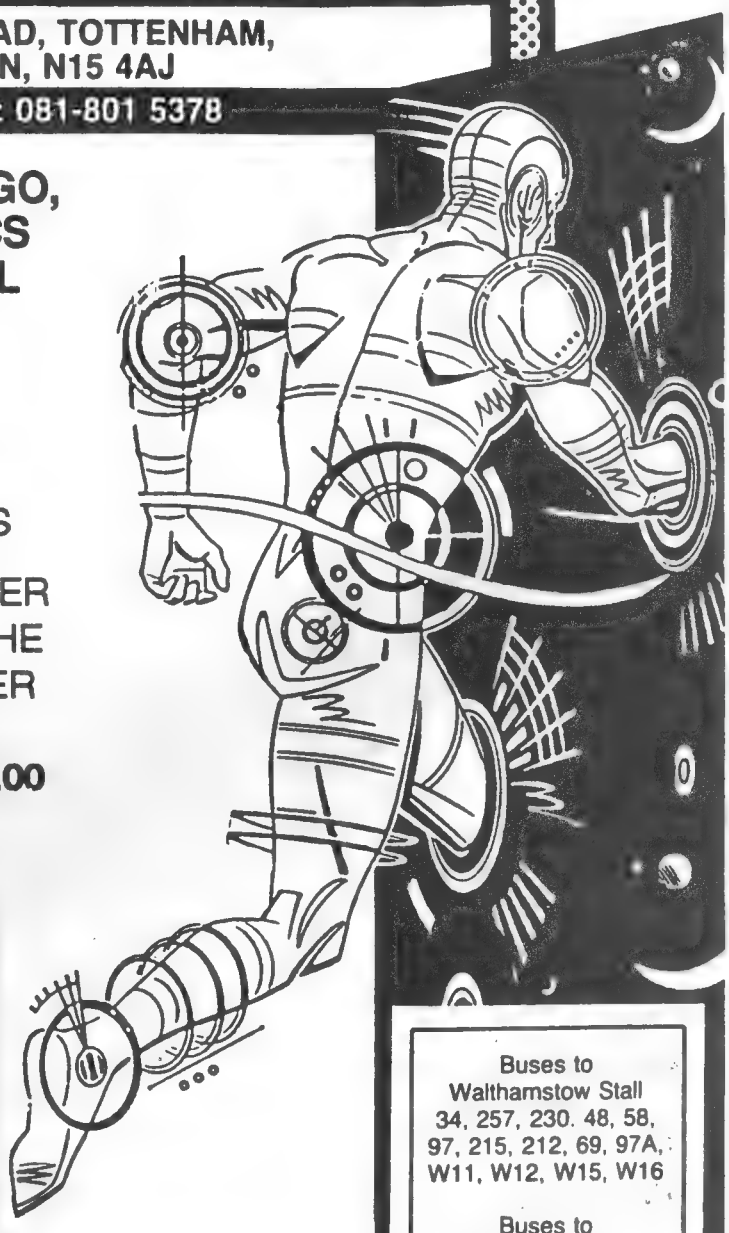

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50 56 (giants) 1.50
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Death: The High Cost of Living (mini) 1 .... 2.25
2 ..... 2.50
3 ..... 2.00
Doom Patrol 26 ... 2.50
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Hellblazer 2 ..... 6.00
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50 (giant) 1.50
53-55 57-62 ..... 1.25
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Annual 1 (1989) 2.50
Special 1 (1993) 1.95
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Morrison mini 1, 2 ... 2.25
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Last One 1-5 ..... 0.75
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Mister E 1-4 ..... 1.00
Phantom Stranger
Vertigo Vision #1 ... 1.50
Sandman 1 ..... 20.00
7 ..... 7.50
8 9 ..... 5.00
11 13 ..... 4.50
14 (giant) 5.00
15-20 ..... 4.00
21 ..... 7.50
22 ..... 6.00
31 ..... 2.25
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2 ..... 4.00
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19-22 24 26 28-42 .. 1.00
Skin Graft 1-4 ..... 1.00
Swamp Thing vol 1 1975: 17 18 23 ..... 1.00
Vol 2: (Moore) 29 vfn+ 3.50
30 vfn+ 2.95
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47 56-60 ..... 2.00
67 (Hellblazer preview) vfn 2.00
65 66 72 74 77-80 nm 0.75
82-96 nm 0.50
119 121-138 ..... 0.60
Annuals: 3 5 ..... 2.00
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2 (Turok) 3.00
3 4 5 6 ..... 3.00
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9 11 12 14 15 16 20 . 1.25
Bloodshot 0 ..... 2.50
0 (premium, of 6000) 25.00
1 ..... 2.50
3 4 5 ..... 1.50
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7 ..... 2.25
8 9 10 14 ..... 1.50

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Dinosaurs f/Hire 1 3.50
3 ..... 1.50
8(Genesis bagged) 2.00
Exiles (Gerber) 1 . 2.50
3 (Rune) 2.00
4 (prolog Breathru) 2.50
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3 ..... 1.75
Freex 1(bgd;cpn) . 3.00
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REVIEWS

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***Review codes:** General competitive performance of a title is measured on a scale of 1 to 10. A specific issue's quality, as measured against previous issues: <- - -> to <+ + +>.*

*Two ratings are used for the sake of detailed and fair coverage. The number following each review (on a scale of 1 to 10) is a quality comparison with other similar titles currently being published. We make no attempt to compare **Cerebus** to **Spider-Man**, but review each within the context of its own genre.*

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Reviews Editor: Sarah Bolesworth

Reviewing panel: Fabio Paolo Barbieri (FPB), Phil Hall (PH), Rol Hirst (RH), Mike Kidson (MK), Skinny Melink (SM), Peter C. Phillips, (PCP), Derek G Skinn (DGS), Michael Sperlinger (MS)

DC COMICS

Action Comics 695 <+ -> (Kesel & Guice + Rodier) Perhaps someone can explain why a one-page cameo by Lobo grants this issue a *special* cover gimmick and price hike? Christmas cash-in? The story itself is the old super-suit of armour on a rampage, taken over by outside controller thing. Dull. (RH) 4

Adventures of Superman 508 <-> (Kesel & Kitson + McCarthy) Barry Kitson's often riveting art compensates for a rather weak story that wastes Jack Kirby's Challengers of the Unknown (who, as everyone knows, he later transposed into the Fantastic Four for Marvel). Since Superman's return, the four titles have all basically settled back into the same complacent rut they had been in before Supe's death. (SM) 6

Animal Man 67 <+ -> (Delano & Pugh) While Maxine is lost in a weird state of shock Cliff sulks because the family forgets his birthday and then meets up with Deputy Dan's healing-powered wife. Plotted like the Vertigo equivalent of *The Cosby Show*, it's about time this thing got moving again! (RH) 4

Aquaman: Time and Tide 2 (David & Jarvinen + Vancata) A moving and poignant divulgence of Aquaman's growing up with dolphins. This mirrors Tarzan's origin a little too closely for comfort, but overall the best Aquaman story I can remember reading. (PH) 9

<+> Aquaman's origin is retold here more from the dolphin's point of view — which makes for some quite interesting and imaginative sequences, including Arthur's first encounter with the surface-dwelling humans. (RH) 8

Arcana: Books of Magic Annual 1 (Ney Reiber & Gross) This promising preview of the upcoming Tim Hunter solo book has the young mage dragged headlong into the Children's Crusade. More impressive in its quieter moments, such as the portrayal of Tim's relationship with his couch potato father. (RH) 7

Batman Adventures: Mad Love (Dini & Timm) Amid a wash of pointless specials and bookshelf format epics comes this 64-pager based on the cartoon show, proving far more substantial than any other Bat-book this year. It's the Joker and Harley Quinn; lots of great gags, nice art and a witty plot. Only loses points for being glossy-papered and expensive. (RH) 8

Batman/Judge Dredd: Vendetta in Gotham (Grant & Kennedy) Batman and Judge Dredd fight. That's it. The excuse is that hokey old time travel premise that this massive (and not very exciting) fight scene is Dredd's way of saving Batman's life. Plotted like a '70s issue of **Marvel Team-Up**. Major yawns. (RH) 3

Batman: Shadow of the Bat 24 <-> (Grant & Blebins) Bruce Wayne has a broken back. He's searching for his girlfriend Shondra. Suddenly, Shondra is revealed to possess a wonderful healing power. Can we smell a deus ex machina coming a mile off? Cheap. (RH) 6

Catwoman 6 <- -> (Duffy & Balent) Catwoman's team-up with a local gang of outlaws is the kind of thing you've read many times before, and even Jim Balent's normally fine pencils seem to be a bit on the lazy side. After an excellent start, this title continues to flounder. (SM) 6

Deathstroke, the Terminator 32 <+ -> (Wolfman & Erwin + Blyberg) Deathstroke pursues his wife and her villainous first husband in a well-conceived international caper. Genre comics don't come much better than this — despite the lacklustre artwork, Wolfman manages to weave both personal tragedy and international villainy to perfection. (FPB) 9

Detective Comics 670 <++> (Dixon & Kitson + Hanna) It's interesting to observe how much the Batman supporting cast are having to carry the book these days — due to the central character's complete lack od charisma. Here, the hero is policewoman Montoya, fighting a resurrected Mister Freeze, with dazzling art from guest Barry Kitson. Better than usual. (RH) 7

Flash 87 <+ -> (Waid & Weirango + Marzan) A Christmas heatwave brings an increased crime problem to Keystone City, and it's all part of an evil plot by a mysterious super-villain. Hackneyed, but done with such charm that I can forgive Waid... Nice to see a Christmas story without snow or schmaltz! (RH) 7

Hellblazer 73 <+ -> (Ennis & Dillon) John sinks further into the hallucinatory depths, allowing Ennis to weave a deep and nightmarish allegory of modern America. Dillon again proves his versatility, switching effortlessly from grim reality to a yet grimmer dreamscape. (SM) 8

<+ -> Wandering a nightmare version of the USA, Constantine's mind is beseiged by skin-stealers and bleeding buildings while his body is left defenseless in the slums. The arrival of over-used JFK might have niggled if the rest of the book wasn't so darn good! (RH) 10

Kid Eternity 9 <+ -> (Nocenti & Phillips) Nice to see Nocenti tackling something a bit tougher than the usual run-of-the-mill superhero fare, and if uneven at times, she's generally more successful than less and is fortunate to have a strong artist in Phillips to help through the lagging bits. (SM) 7

Sandman 57 <+ -> (Gaiman & Hempel) The Kindly Ones prepare to visit Sandman while Lyta Hall loses her child and Matthew the Raven asks questions but gets no answers. Promising much, yet somehow stalling for time, Gaiman begins the final story arc with strong and vivid art from Hempel. (RH) 7

Shade, the Changing Man 43 <+ -> (Milligan & Bachalo + Bond) The difference in styles between artists Bachalo and Bond seem more and more jarring the longer it goes on, and if Milligan seems to be trying too hard of late, he still manages a couple of zingers per issue. (SM) 7

An excursion to the 17th century is an interesting idea that doesn't quite gel; but it isn't helped by a misguided Hellblazer crossover, either. Nevertheless, Lenny and Kathy remain captivating, as does Bachalo's art. (MS) 7

Shade the Changing Man 44 <+ -> (Milligan & Bachalo + Bryant) Justifying John Constantine's guest shot with an interesting insight into his birth, Milligan concludes *History Lessons* with Kathy keeping her baby and Shade turning into a tree. But why is it that Bachalo's faces seem to have become long and distorted? (RH) 8

Showcase '94 #1 (Robinson & Alamy + various) The Joker finds himself in a twisted Gotham, caught between Venom-like versions of himself and Batman. A simple enough idea with a strong script and Lightle-esque art. Back-ups featuring Gunfire and the New Gods merely fill space. (RH) 6

Spectre 15 <+ -> (Ostrander & Phillips) The Spectre fights the Jihad in Cairo while judging whether the human race deserves to live. A gripping premise with the title character switched to a villain's role while the Phantom Stranger gathers a team of supernatural heroes to confront him. Great art. (RH) 8

Superboy 1 (Kesel & Grummett) The best thing to come out of the *Reign of the Supermen* saga, the new kid with an attitude of steel arrives on Hawaii and ends up trading quips with a dumb villain. Mindless fun — but fun, without a doubt. (RH) 8

Superboy takes to the skies once more in what seems like the umpteenth series with this title. But... this time it is different. The supposed clone of Superman hits the south Pacific and an unsuspecting, peaceful Hawaii. Excellent visuals, and a pacy story that leaves an appetite for more. (PH) 8

Superman Man of Steel 30 <-> (Simonson & Bogdanove + Janke) Superman battles Lobo — and why? Do they need a reason? Senseless fight issue in the best Lobo tradition, with the ultimate in empty cover enhancements — stick-on figures to create your *own* picture. How about a blank cover and free pencils so we can draw it ourselves? (RH) 2

Wonder Woman 83 <+ -> (Loebs & Moder + Parks) While Superman and Batman grab all the headlines, it's their female counterpart who is really worth reading these days. Diana's betrayer realises her mistake in time to stop Ares, but leaves Diana holding the devil's baby. Watch this one — it's getting rather good. (RH) 9

MARVEL COMICS

Amazing Spider-Man 386 <+ -> (Michelinie & Bagley) Michelinie really needs a rest. Destroying the best Spider-Man story in recent years (DeMatteis's *Funeral Rites*), Michelinie brings back the Vulture and pulls a naff stunt on him using a so-called juvenator machine. Oh, puh-lease. (RH) 3

Captain America 424 <+> (Gruenwald & Gosier) That old chestnut of the bad guy in need of dough for a worthy cause handled fairly well, and nicely drawn by fill-in artist Phil Gosier. In this issue, the seeds are planted for big changes in Cap's life. (SM) 8

<+++> How you like this one depends on how much sentiment you take with your coffee; but to me, the story of an old Cap villain and his sick daughter is the first really good Gruenwald writing in years, full of good ideas, with attractive characters and believable problems of conscience. (FPB) 7

Captain Marvel 1 (McDuffie + Coye & Bright) Captain Marvel is not used to her full potential here and the well-meaning story ultimately turns up empty and rather silly as well, despite a nice effort from penciller Mark Bright. (SM) 6

So you have a character with black skin. So what do you do with her? You put her in a story featuring racist attacks and resurrecting the Sons of the Serpant. I don't care if the authors are black themselves; this is tokenism — not noticeably well executed, either. (FPB) 4

Daredevil: Man Without Fear 5 <+ -> (Miller & Romita Jr + Williamson) Easily the best thing Marvel's done in years, a brisk, powerful, and dynamic tale of DD's early days that excels in every department. If only everything Marvel did was half as good... (SM) 10

<+ -> This stylish retelling of Matt Murdock's past gathers pace for a showdown between the hero and the Kingpin's right-hand man. The script is good, but its biggest asset is the beautiful, crisp Romita Jr art. (MS) 9

<+-> The conclusion of Miller's latest masterpiece, the sort of book you didn't think Marvel published any more. Yes, the showdown is violent, but Miller understands violence in a

way that never cheapens it. Every word of script has an impact, every panel of art leaves you crying for more. (RH) 10

Groo 108 <+ -> (Aragones + Evanier) Groo finds himself elected to government through the usual blundering medley of mistakes and coincidences. As always, Aragones shows his skill for satire while still keeping up the stupid running jokes we've come to expect from this book. (RH) 8

Harrowers 1 (Smith + Sagal & Colan + Rubinstein) A sorry montage of cliches from the horror, superhero and fantasy genres — a goddess gives six misfits super-powers and then sends them on a mission to Hell. Execrably written by two unknowns and criminally wasting Colan and Rubinstein, who do nothing to save this rubbish. (FPB)1

Incredible Hulk 414 <+> (David & Frank + Smith) Another fine-paced, delicately-scripted issue, the second part of the *Troyjan War*. An ever more edgy Hulk pursues Trauma and Atalanta into space, where he runs into an old acquaintance. Frank's art, meanwhile, seems more accomplished each month. (MS) 8

<+ -> The adventure begins with the Hulk being unimpressed with the Pantheon's star ship and ends with the villain, Trauma, being very impressed with the circle of friends the Incredible Bruce hangs out with. Gary Frank continues to excel himself and, like his predecessor Dale Keown, looks like he's enjoying drawing Marvel's most intelligent comic character. (PH) 9

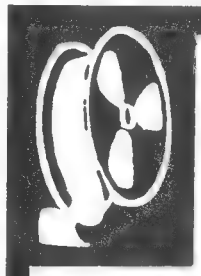
Namor 47 <++> (Herdling & Isherwood) A so-what plot about wicked aliens trying to drown Earth under water, redeemed not by fine characterisation — all the characters are pretty basic — but by quite exceptional pacing, an instinctive gift for suspense (there is a splendid double cliffhanger ending) and beautiful artwork. (FPB) 7

Quasar 54 <+ -> (Gruenwald & Heebink) Layla and Earth's Watcher are kidnapped by somebody *very* powerful. The trouble with this book is that it has to show ultimate threats — menaces to the universe, to the multiverse, whatever. How can a reader worry about powers so absurd and abstract? Too many guest stars here, too. (FPB) 5

Spectacular Spider-Man 209 <-> (Grant & Buscema) The promise shown by Grant's earlier stories disappears as he drags up the old Peter David villain, the Foreigner, and then wastes him with a hokey old plotline and the introduction of yet more battle-armoured badguys with naff names like Dead Aim. Next, please. (RH) 4

Spider-Man 2099 #16 <-> (David & Leonardi + Hudson) Miguel battles Thor in the opening shot of the first 2099 crossover. An amusing script from David, though it's annoying that we're supposed to buy all the rest of the books just to follow the plot from this. Crossovers suck. (RH) 7

Spider-Man Unlimited 4 <+ -> (Defalco & Lim) In a plot that Stan might have rejected 30 years ago (but then maybe not), Mysterio introduces and unmasks a Spider-Man imposter so as to coin it with the merchandising. And everybody falls for it. Just like the suckers (myself included) who paid three quid for this book! (RH) 3



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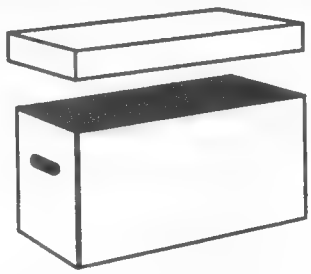

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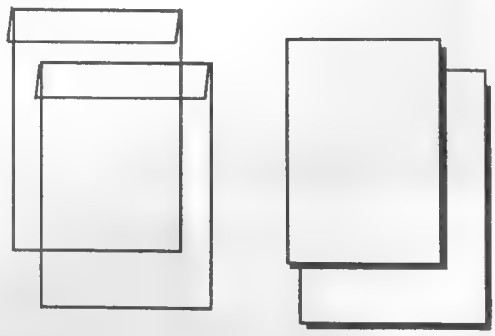

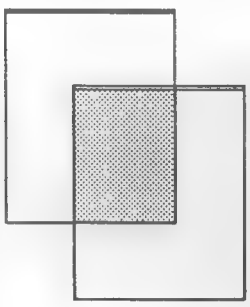

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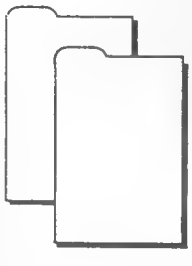

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Wolverine: Blood Hungry (David & Kieth) The quality shouldn't be a surprise coming from these two, but truly original Wolverine stories are few and far between — that's why it's so satisfying to find one like this, where the brilliance of the dialogue is only matched by the dark, unsettling art. (MS) 9

Uncanny X-Men 309 (Lobdell & Romita Jr) Professor X has to confront some unpleasant home truths in this story which shows Lobdell's writing at its most mature. His scripts are often at their best (as here) when they are extended character studies; leaving of course the problem that little is left for the artist but talking heads. (MS) 7

Wolverine 78 <+ -> (Hama & Kubert + Farmer) A classic hunter-is-the-prey issue which shows that Wolverine can be as cunning and quick-witted as he can ferocious. A title which has its ups and downs but keeps coming back with interesting ideas. (PH) 8

X-Men 29 <+ -> (Niceza & Kubert + Ryan) Life with the super-powered Hannibal Lector continues with developments involving Psylocke and her strange attractions to the wrong men — perhaps another, less than impressive mutant ability. Archangel wrestles with his past and the new Hellfire club, but Shinobi Shaw fails to get the half-nelson on him. (PH) 7

INDEPENDENTS

Age of Reptiles 1 (Dark Horse; Delgado) It's hard to see the point of this mini; even as a case of jumping on the Jurassic bandwagon, it fails. There is literally no writing — only a lot of lizards biting hell out of each other — and the art while competent is not really so wonderful as to warrant a showcase of its own. (FPB) 4

Age of Reptiles 2 (Dark Horse; Delgado) Ricardo Delgado has an uncanny knack — the ability to tell a compelling story without the use of a single word. The story is uncomplicated, the art reminiscent of William Stout and Arthur Adams. A visual treat that loses out to the mini-series format; it should have been a graphic novel. (PH) 8

Blanche Goes to Hollywood (Dark Horse; Geary) Another delightful adventure from penciller nonpareil Rick Geary, this one set in the early days of Hollywood. No one dominates the black-and-white medium like Geary does, and no one quite tells a tale like he does, either. (SM) 10

Bloodshot 0 (Valiant; Van Hook & Van Hook + Giordano) Special issue revealing the early encounter between Eternal Warrior and the pre-Bloodshot Angelo Mortalli. A meaty crime melodrama which would have been better served without the price-inflating metallic cover. (PCP) 7

Bone 9 (Cartoon Books; Smith) If you can imagine the humour and visual appeal of a Disney cartoon combined with the dark fantasy of say, **Lord of the Rings**, you've a pretty good idea of what to expect of this book. What may surprise you is the consummate skill of the storytelling and the wonderful fluency of the art. (MS) 10

Dracula versus Zorro 1 (Topps; McGregor & Yeates + Magyar) A laborious cross-genre feature long on narrative, short on action — though Zorro does get to scrawl a few Zs on some superstitious Peons. Sterling work from Yeates, lifting it from utter tediousness. But only just. (PCP) 4

Femforce 66 (AC; Smoot & Roberts + various) Non-stop actioner involving most of the AC heroes/heroines as the war with the Rur continues — including the return of Fem Paragon — and a humourous mood change for the She-Cat. Chapter three of the Black Phantom serial introduces oriental heroine China Doll in a passable, but too short episode. (PCP) 6

Femforce 67 <-> (AC; Black & Heike + Roberts + Allen) Violent conclusion to the Rur/Earth war saga. Somewhat simplistic in its denouement, although the characters' development is well executed. Black Phantom continues to fill the back-up slot in a bizarre mystical scenario involving her horse playing poker with a bunch of bad hats. If it's meant to be serious, it fails. (PCP) 5

Firearm 2 (Ultraverse; Robinson & Hamner) As Punisher clones go, this guy makes Frank Castle look fourth rate. Possibly the most entertaining of the Ultraverse titles (script-wise, at least) sees Firearm continue his quest for a missing person, this time tracking down, helping and humiliating Hardcase within seven pages. The scene where Firearm calls Hardcase "a tart" is really quite wonderful. (PH) 8

Freak Force 1 (Image; Larsen + Giffen & Bridges + Story) Spin-off from the **Savage Dragon** series. The heroes take on a bounty hunt to raise revenue for their new headquarters. The action laden plot comes complete with the usual superteam cliches. Nice visuals, but little substance. (PCP) 3

Good Guys 1 (Defiant; Childress + Shooter & Grey + various) Teenaged comic collectors acquire superhuman abilities. Routine fare made readable by realistic dialogue. (PCP) 5

Mermaid Forest 1 (Viz; Takahashi) The wonderful author of **Ranma** and **Lum** in a much more sombre mood. A wicked doctor kidnaps a girl in the belief that she may be a mermaid, whose flesh will make him immortal — as local superstitions say. But the girl has a friend, and a supernatural guardian to boot... (FPB) 8

Night Man 1 (Ultraverse; Englehart & Robertson + Pepoy) Englehart returns to the creature-of-the-night scenario as another survivor of the (**Strangers**) trolleycar accident acquires bizarre powers. Excellent narrative with an unexpected denouement. Also features another **Rune** segment. (PCP) 8

Phantom Force 1 (Image; Kirby + various) He's back! Some pages (part of an earlier story) fit badly with the rest, the hero's name is stupid (Gin Seng, for God's sake!), but the graphics are lovely, the story is vigorous and Oliff's colours are a match for Kirby's genius. The King is back — and it's like he never left. (FPB) 8

Superhero fails in his attempt to secure anti-virus serum resulting in

martial arts expert Gin Seng being coerced into helping out. Kirby dynamics abound but can't disguise what is one of his throwaway ideas. Several "kot" artists take turns in inking various pages — to no real effect. (PCP) 4

Forget **1963**, who needs a homage-pastiche-ripoff when you can buy the real thing. Vintage Kirby, straight in at the deep end, with vibrant new characters you can actually remember the next day. Even some of the dodgy inking is forgotten once you're caught up in the fast-paced storytelling. (DGS) 8

Shadowman 22 (Valiant; Hall & Hall + Dixon) Boniface continues to leap-frog through time and the mystery of the original Shadowman deepens. Hall's overdue shake-up makes for compelling reading. (PCP) 7

Sin City 1 (Dark Horse; Miller) So far, little more than a routine stab at the hardboiled PI genre and, striking as they are, Miller's stark noirish pencils are often heavier than the story calls for. From anyone else, this might have been acceptable, but from Miller you expect the best and, with five issues to go, he still may deliver. (SM) 7

We're very firmly in Chandler territory this time around, but the foundations remain the same: a hard, evocative script and stark astonishing visuals, from the kingpin of crime stories. (MS) 9

Sludge 2 <+ -> (Ultraverse; Gerber & Lopresti) Big guns hitman is hired to take down the Sludge. Gerber spins a subtle twist to what could be standard fare, though empathy for the muck monster is strangely lacking. As is the case with most Ultraverse titles — strong scripts plus visuals make for winning combinations. (PCP) 7

Solitaire 1 (Ultraverse; Jones & Johnson + Kaalberg) An apparently immortal costumed vigilante confronts a crime-lord with a penchent for enslaving youngsters in a sexual pleasure palace. No frills writing and visuals make for compelling opener in the very readable Ultraverse roster. (PCP) 7

Solution 1 (Ultraverse; Hudnall & Robertson + Lowe) Another superteam for hire leaps onto the overstuffed comic racks offering yet more variations on a well-rehearsed theme. That said it shows promise, providing the central characters can be properly developed and stereotypes avoided. (PCP) 5

Spawn 17 <-> (Image; Morrison & Capullo + Panosian + Thibert) Al Simmons faces his own corpse while, unknown to him, a new foe is born — the Anti-Spawn. Absence makes the heart grow fonder and McFarlane is sorely missed from his title. Whatever his faults, Capullo isn't worthy to sharpen Todd's pencils and Morrison's effort is simply half-hearted. (MS) 3

Strangers 5 <- -> (Ultraverse; Englehart & Hoberg) The old guy from issue one becomes the walking embodiment of death in a politically correct and remarkably pretentious issue. Morally dubious, too: it seems that death from AIDS is good, but death from cancer is bad. Get a life. (FPB) 4

Strangers 6 <+ -> (Ultraverse; Englehart & Hoberg) Did we need a follow up to last month's death-wish story? No, we didn't. Nor did we need to be told that Yrial really *is* a nice girl under all that bluster. Englehart should have kept the sense of pace and fun in the first few issues rather than trying to be clever. (FPB) 4

Warriors of Plasm 5 <-> (Defiant; Shooter + Lapham + Wein & Lapham) The inevitable letdown after an engrossing first few issues, and further marred by Shooter sneaking in the rest of the Defiant universe. At least the colouring's improved... (SM) 6

SMALL PRESS

All Right 2 (85p from Charlotte Cooper/Simon Murphy, 8 Hanley Court, Hanley Road, London N4 3QB) A set of gags in strip form — tiny snippets of humour and observation, especially of 1970s pop culture, which revel in their triviality. The moment for which it will amuse you is enjoyable, but the after-effects are strangely depressing. Intriguing... (MK) 6

Chain Mesh 3 (75p from Rich Holden, 77 Liverpool Rd, Buckley, Clwyd CH7 3LH) Like **Sisterson**, a game of consequences in which a dozen creators assemble an extended piece of whimsy. Plots keep threatening to appear but never quite do, enabling you to savour it in reverse (if that's what turns you on). Forget about the breadth, just enjoy the length. (MK) 7

Instant Comics (£1 from Andy Roberts, 25 Hart St, Oxford OX2 6BN) This neatly-packaged selection of montage, sketches and doodles is unified by a sensibility which rejects the daily flood of consumer detritus and affirms the value of human contact. In other words, it's a healthy and highly recommendable comic. (MK) 8

Man of Blood 1 & 2 (£1 each from Paul Neal, 25 Stevens Court, Ingram Crescent, Hove, East Sussex BN3 5LZ) Of the two ongoing stories, the rogue cop one scores plenty for detail, less for originality. *Pilgrims* begins as a routine SF quest but gets metaphysical in the second issue. Too many words soften the kink-edged hardness of it all, but Vertigo fans might like it. (MK) 5

Scenes from the Inside 2 (Drat n Blast Publications; anthology; £2.75 from Steve Tunn, 10 Harcourt Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 7RG) **Purr Quarterly** might have had a bigger promotional budget, but this is far better. Following an unfortunate opening Jaime Hernandez swipe a wild mixture of styles and ideas assaults you, with Matthew Burton's *Skin Love* standing out for weird attractiveness. Buy now! (MK) 9

Silver Age Superman (£3.50 from Ed Pinsent, 43a Finsen Road, Camberwell, London SE5 9AW) The '60s Superman investigates the meaning and purpose of knowledge. If DC had the creative intelligence and guts to risk a project as loving and intelligent as this, they'd be producing astoundingly good comics. As it is, they could never conceive of anything like this. It's absolutely the best Superman story I've ever read. (MK) 10

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■ **Red Hot Comics,** 42 Berridale Ave, Cathcart, Glasgow G44 3AE (CoBRA, s-wants) 041-637 0162 (10am-11pm)

■ **Stateside Comics PLC,** 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, Herts EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 081-449 5535

HOT COMICS

Current or key titles, usually first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble on what will increase in value.

■ **Comics Unlimited,** Unit 11, The Arcade, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. (wants, CoBRA) 0462 480018

■ **Cosmic Comics,** PO Box 1771, London E17 9PW. (cat, wants, CoBRA)

■ **Darkside,** 32 Marlborough Road, London E18 1AP (wants, CoBRA) 081 989 9955

■ **Edge of Forever, The,** 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 081-298 1363

■ **Floppy Tongue,** 96 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 7QY (cat, w/s, wants, CoBRA) 0722 331107

■ **Graphically Speaking,** 49 Roman Road, London E2. (s-wants, CoBRA) 081 983 4602

■ **Incognito,** 14 Starnes Court, Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. (s-wants, CoBRA, cc) Phone/Fax 0622-683642

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ADVANCE IMPORTS

US comics are not in newsagents, except for almost all DCs and most $1.25 Marvels, shipped seafreight. The following offer air-shipped copies from all major publishers.

■ **ACE Comics,** 1 Headgate Buildings, St Johns Street, Colchester, Essex C02 7AD (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 0206 561912

■ **Arrival Comics,** 2 Broad Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1HP (s-wants) 0902 313660

■ **Beyond Comics & Books,** 1 Ballina St, London SE23 1DR (s-cat, s-wants, CoBRA) 081 291 3976

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■ **Edge of Forever, The,** 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 081-298 1363

■ **Floppy Tongue,** 96 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 7QY (cat, w/s, wants, CoBRA) 0722 331107

■ **Forbidden Planet,** 71 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DG (s-cat, cc) 071 497 2150

■ **Incognito,** 14 Starnes Court, Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. (s-wants, CoBRA, cc) Phone/fax 0622-683642

■ **Mega-City Comics,** 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ (s-cat, cc, CoBRA) 071 485 9320

■ **Planet X,** 5 London Road, Worcester WR5 2DJ (wants,CoBRA) Phone/fax: 0905 355055

■ **Red Hot Comics,** 42 Berridale Ave, Cathcart, Glasgow G44 3AE (CoBRA, s-wants) 041-637 0162 (10am-11pm)

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■ **Timezone,** 12 Fish Street, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1UR (dis, cat, wants) 0743 365192

LIMITED EDITIONS

Many high-profile mini-series and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print run "ashcan" editions (ash).

■ **Arrival Comics,** 2 Broad St, Wolverhampton WV1 1HP (s-list, s&n, ash) 0902 313660

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order,** 158 Kent House Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, s&n, s-cat, cc) 081-659 9714

■ **Darkside,** 32 Marlborough Road, London E18 1AP (wants, CoBRA, ash) 081 989 9955

■ **Edge of Forever, The,** 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc, s&n) 081-298 1363

■ **Stateside Comics PLC,** 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n) 081-449 5535

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An increasing number of traders carry a wide range of comics-related trading cards and their peripherals (files, folders, etc).

■ **Adventure Seekers!,** 105 Hullbrook Road, Billesley, Birmingham, B13 OLE (cat, wants) 021 444 0986

■ **Fantasy Domain,** 212 Grange Rd, Plaistow, London E13 0HB (s-cat, s-wants, CoBRA)

■ **First Choice Cards,** 11 Keith Avenue, Liverpool L4 5SL (cat, wants, CoBRA) 051 5214054

■ **Floppy Tongue,** 96 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 7QY (cat, w/s, wants, CoBRA) 0722 331107

■ **Forest Comics,** 11 Oakley Way, Bream, Lydney, Glos. (cat, wants) 0594-563692

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ORIGINAL ART

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available.

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MERCHANDISE

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■ **Stateside Comics PLC,** 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 081-449 5535

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■ **Edge of Forever, The,** 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc, s&n) 081-298 1363

■ **Incognito,** 14 Starnes Court, Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. (s-wants, CoBRA, cc) Phone/fax 0622-683642

■ **Just Comics,** 2 Crossmead Ave, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 9TY (w/s only, CoBRA) 081 578 1308

■ **Stateside Comics PLC,** 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis, CoBRA, cc) 081-449 5535

COMICS AUCTIONS

Accepting lots from the general public, comics auctions can provide an alternative way for collectors to sell their comics.

■ **Comic Book Postal Auctions Limited,** 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 071 586 3007

■ **Flights of Fantasy,** 82b Broadway, Bexleyheath DA6 7LW (cat) 081-298 1363

MANGA TITLES

English language translations and Japanese-style American comics.

■ **ACE Comics,** 1 Headgate Buildings, St Johns Street, Colchester, Essex C02 7AD (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 0206 561912

■ **Edge of Forever, The,** 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 081-298 1363

ART & REFERENCE

Comics history reference magazines & books (ref) plus art books (art) and newspaper strip compilations (strip).

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order,** 158 Kent House Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, ref, art, strip, s-cat, cc) 081-659 9714

■ **Edge of Forever, The,** 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, ref, cc) 081-298 1363

ALTERNATIVE & BIOG

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life titles (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar, etc)

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■ **Knockabout Comics,** 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (w/s, s-cat, cc) 081 969 2945 (fax: 081 968 7614)

AMERICAN COMICS DISTRIBUTORS

Anybody considering opening a comics specialist shop can obtain further information about the supply of titles from any of the following wholesalers, who air-freight bulk copies of North American comics and related items into Britain on a weekly basis:

■ **Diamond Comic Distributors,** Unit 3, Crown Business Estate, Horton Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 8BR 0895-431 582

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THE COMICS WAREHOUSE

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THE CLEARANCE CENTRE FOR PUBLISHER'S OVERSTOCKS AND REMAINDERS

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Welcome to another month of special Warehouse finds. The Image, Valiant, Dark Horse and Ultraverse sections are expanding, the Marvel 2099 titles are creeping in, we've another two issues of Spawn at knockdown prices, and the razzle dazzle Batman 500 is now available from us at a mere 60p newsstand, or £1.50 Collectors die cut. Not only that, we landed the find of the season, another one hundred copies of each number of Sword of Azrael (and at a good price too, check it out). Talking of prices, look out that hard to find New Warriors this month, have we got it or have we got it?! Just so you don't miss it, Legends of the Dark Knight is no longer grouped with the Batman Books, its positioned after Kamandi and before Legionnaires (an overlooked by many, fun book). We're still giving a copy of Advance Comics with orders over £20.00 (or you can purchase them for £2.00 each), numbers available are 57 to 61 inclusive. If you received an Advance with your order last month let us know the number so that we don't duplicate it this month. Thank you for your Christmas cards and all the kind letters we've been getting, all are appreciated, and many of the ideas put forward will be actioned in coming months. In this advertisement all the prices given are for individual copies of single issues, except "set" prices which are for the specific sets advertised. All of our advertisements and offers of comics for sale are completely self contained and cannot be mixed and matched with any other advertisements or offers. This advertisement is valid from the publication of Comics International 39 until March 7th 1994 only. When ordering Vertigo and Pre-Vertigo "Mature" titles we must have your honest signed statement that you are in excess of 16 years. Happy hunting, good reading, welcome to The Warehouse and welcome to 1994.

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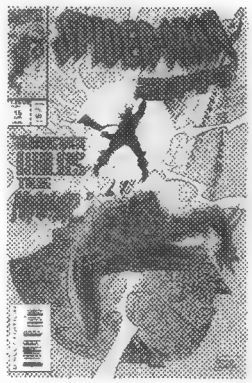
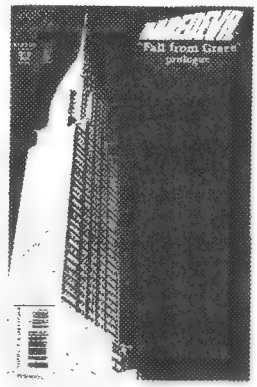


SPIDERMAN 2099; The 2099 books are coming on strong; Issue 15 - 70p



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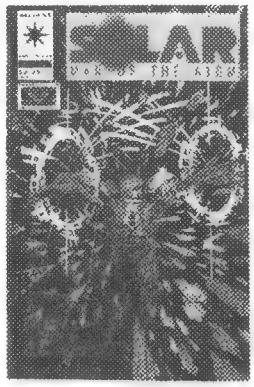

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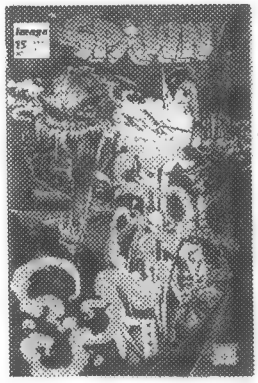

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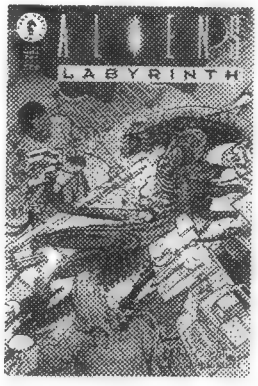

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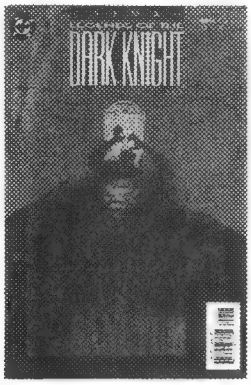

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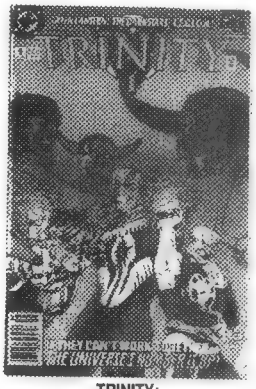

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Unlimited rip-off

LAST issue we forecasted that **Spider-Man Unlimited** 4 would be a milestone in comics history and a major turning point for everyone's favourite wall-crawler.

But in the pre-release blurb in the Marvel direct sales catalogue **Sales to Astonish** (a bastion of accuracy, as regular readers know), **Spider-Man Unlimited** 4 was said to reveal Spidey's identity to the world.

But the closest we actually got to Peter Parker revealing his true identity was him getting changed in his bedroom...

Ordinarily such a promotional exaggeration wouldn't be so worrisome — if it weren't for the fact that many retailers ordered extra copies of this expensive quarterly because of the promised revelation. Returns facility, perhaps? Doubtful, as there's no appropriate trades description legislation in the States.

So yet again all retailers fall foul of an ordering policy which wouldn't be allowable under current UK consumer law, but then it's US product. Is there a lawyer in the house?

In this current time of distributors tightening (or should that be Titaning?) up with publishers on not accepting late-shipping books, surely Marvel has to consider accepting returns for books which are clearly different in content to those originally solicited.

"We kid you not, true believers, Spidey's identity exposed to the world." Actual words used in the sales literature; sadly not a true one among them.

Vertigo Visions

DESPITE reports late last year that DC's Vertigo imprint was threatened by cutbacks, a host of new Vertigo titles are planned for publication this year.

● A second series of **Books of Magic** starring Timothy Hunter will follow December's **Arcana Annual: The Children's Crusade**, which relaunched the comics career of the young mage Timothy Hunter. Drafted by writer John Ney Reiber (Neil Gaiman is rumoured to be providing plot ideas), it is being illustrated by British artist John Ridgway.

● **Goddess** is a series blending black humour, violent satire and ecological themes by ex-**Hellblazer** writer Garth Ennis with art by **Car Warriors**' Phil Winslade.

This book was originally scheduled to be an 8-issue pre-Vertigo DC mini with a launch date of September, 1992. Let's hope creators are paid on acceptance, rather than publication!

● **Blood and Shadows** is a mini series from **Jonah Hex: Two Gun Mojo** writer and successful novelist Joe Lansdale, with art by the man responsible for the very first and continually reprinted Dark Horse **Aliens** mini-series, Mark Nelson.

The book's production was begun in 1991 (**Comics International #12**), when it was to be a 4-issue 48-page title about private detective Chet Daly's pursuit of The God of the Razor, a strange deity intent on dominating our dimension.

● Brendan McCarthy and Pete Milligan's **Rogan Gosh**, which first appeared in Fleetway's **Revolver** magazine, is set to confuse American comics fans through a Vertigo one-shot reprinting the entire story. Nice one, Art.

● Vertigo is also publishing the delayed **Witchcraft**, relaunching the host characters originally featured in DC's 1970s horror anthology **The Witching Hour** and revived in **The Sandman**.

Witchcraft - The Three Witches features the hot British writer James (**Firearm**) Robinson and former **Sandman** editor Alisa Kwitney with framing art from Teddy (**Grendel**) Kristiansen.

Three artists will co-ordinate on the series — Michael (**Puma Blues**) Zulli, Peter Snejberg and Steve (**Sebastion O**) Yeowell. Each artist will draw a witch throughout her appearance in the story.

The centuries-spanning reincarnation opus concerns the witches' attempts to avenge their priestess's death in Ancient Britain.

● A new Warren Pleece series, **Mobfire**, is set to debut during the summer. No story details yet, but it is to reported to be drawn by newcomer Gary Ushaw.

● Also planned is a Karen Berger-inspired Vertigo event, a series of 64-page oneshot creator owned specials during September and October. Grant Morrison, Pete Milligan, Jamie Delano and Ted McKeever are already signed up.

Artists for the books include Duncan Fegredo, Jamie Hewlett and Philip Bond. More next month.

● The big question Vertigo fans are asking at the moment is who will be Garth Ennis's replacement when he leaves **Hellblazer** after the *Rake at the Gates of Hell* storyline.

A Vertigo ITMite suggests that it could be Pete Milligan, who has already done development work on John Constantine's childhood for recent issues of **Shade, the Changing Man** — which Milligan is rumoured to be leaving soon after issue 50.

Quotes of the Month

Quote: Todd McFarlane, a man not known for extensive character development in **Spawn**, has changed his tune a little over the last few years.

The case in point is the following excerpt from the letters page of December 1981's **Superman Family** #213, penned by a certain Mr Todd McFarlane: *"...and while the story was 14 pages long, only two of them showed Supergirl in action. I like a good battle as much*

as anyone, but having twelve pages for characterisation was better than any fight could be. I like to see what Linda [Supergirl]'s thoughts are and how she reacts to different situations."

While you could assume that this may have been one of the much-vaunted early McFarlane ghost personas, his letter concludes *"...but when I'm excited, I tend to ramble."* Now, that would go a long way to explaining a few things.

Quote: For all of the **Swamp Thing** readers excited about the news that Mark Millar is about to solo-script the comic, here's a snippet of Mark's editorial from Trident Comics' **Saviour** issue 6, lambasting his readers: *"Where were you lot at the Eagle awards? There I was, eagerly sitting in the front row turning every ten seconds towards Grant Morrison, Pete Milligan, etc., with a huge, smug grin on my face. Closest to the stage to make my journeys less wearisome, and what happens? None of you sods voted for me. And don't think I didn't notice. I'll remember you... Every last one of you."*

And I shall have my revenge. Just wait until I get hold of one of your favourite titles... like ***Swamp Thing****. I'll give him a cape and a super-pet. I'll have him patrolling the swamps of Louisiana looking for environmentally unfriendly crime..."*

We can picture it now... "Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a flying turd wearing a cloak".

Sibling Rivalry

THE wedding of Scott (Cyclops) Summers and Jean (Phoenix nee Marvel Girl) Grey has been one of the most drawn out subplots in X-Men history.

As the romance is finally resolved, the latest attempt at complicating the lives of these two original X-Men unfolds...

The possibility of there being a third Summers brother was hinted at in **X-Men** 19 by devious schemer Mr Sinister. Scott had already had one brother flipped into the story 25 years ago in **Uncanny X-Men** 55. Now, we are to about to discover the third Summers boy is Gambit, the Cajun thief with an eye for Rogue and a devilish way with playing-cards.

It seems that his kinetic powers are derived from solar energy, the same source which fuels both Cyclops and Havok's abilities.

What fans will be most interested in reading is how Fabian Nicieza and Scott Lobdell explain the fact that nobody (including Scott's parents) seemed aware of this brother's existence.

Quite what Cyclops and Havok's reaction will be towards their father, the Starjammer Corsair, should also prove interesting. It would appear he did a lot more than he let on about before being abducted by space aliens.

Image completists note

COLLECTORS of work by the artists who founded Image Comics should check out Marvel's **What The...?!** issue 5.

This hidden gem features art by Eric Larsen, Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, Larry Stroman and Hilary Barta. A regular pre-Image jam and one which, on inspection, is a lot funnier than either issues of **Stupid** and the very poor **Spitting Image**.

Until dealers read this, **What The...?!** #5 should be readily available in comic mart cheap boxes at no more than 25p.

Hitting on funny Bone

ONE of the most successful independent comics to surface over the last couple of years is Jeff Smith's **Bone**.

A sort of **Cerebus** meets Disney meets *The Far Side*, **Bone**'s popularity is proven by it currently running up to tenth printing on early issues.

Smith publishes the comic in the same way as Gilbert Sheldon's **Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers**, constantly reprinting early issues thus keeping the title in print with a reasonable cover price.

Regardless of this fact, UK fans are searching desperately for copies of the comic and are paying upwards of £5, regardless of what printing it is.

It was recently estimated by a London dealer that a first edition **Bone** 1 would probably sell for over £100. But that's not so ridiculous when you consider that a similar **Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers** 1 sold for $600 at a recent US convention.

Priced without Fear

DAREDEVIL, that comic for all seasons, is back with a real bang.

The *Fall From Grace* storyline in the ongoing title has caught almost everybody out. Dealers are offering to pay as much as £10 for issues 319 and 320, published hardly six months ago for only 95p.

With the few newsstand copies of 319 that are available fetching £7.50, the superhero who has as many lows as highs is firmly re-established as a fan favourite.

All issues of *Fall From Grace* are selling briskly and retailers can at least order one Marvel title with a little confidence at the moment.

A better longterm investment may be the **Man Without Fear** mini series, which although still available at many shops, is still popular as a slightly higher-priced back issue.

Troubled Shooter?

IN the wake of the Innovation, Majestic and Nemesis failures and the restructuring of Marvel UK into a solely newsstand-serving publisher, it could be that there are troubled times ahead for one of the industry's leading lights.

The knowledge that key Defiant backer River Group is cutting back on its trading card sets (citing the glut of product on the market as their reason) may well have caused tremors at Defiant's uptown head office. After all, the publishing venture hasn't really been the monumental success it was predicted to be.

Recently it was announced that Shooter was to write **Youngblood** for Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios. (Ignore his Continuity work about to appear, he did that even before Valiant). But this does seem to be a strange practice for an editor-in-Chief of a rival comics publisher.

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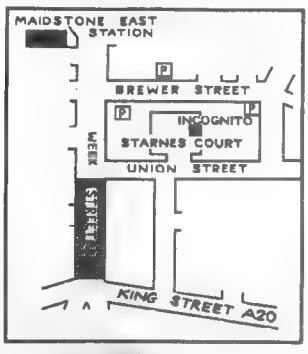

this is, in fact, part of a cooperation between Liefeld and Shooter. A reciprocal arrangement, with each adding to the other's line.

Alas, poor Innovation

It is a great shame to see innovative publishers go the way of First Comics, Charlton, Tundra and various incarnations of Comico.

So where did Innovation go wrong, especially with such strong licensed material?

The immensely popular **Quantum Leap** was serialised in a variety of ongoing and mini-series and eventually the company managed a **Quantum Leap** ongoing (albeit infrequent) series.

Lost in Space still has a tremendous cult following in the western world, while adaptations of novels by Anne Rice, Larry Niven, Jerry Pournel and Piers Anthony were very well received.

It is perhaps the adaptation of Piers Anthony's **On a Pale Horse** that summed up Innovation's failure. Late-shipping titles in the present crowded marketplace gain no fan loyalty.

On a Pale Horse 1 shipped in the early summer of 1991, issue two came some five months later. Issue three shipped 10 months later and issue four hit the shops at the beginning of December 1993. A total of 33 months to ship four out of a six-part series.

It's hardly surprising that a company should fail if it doesn't keep its audience satisfied with a regular fix of what they want.

Ironic Image

NOW that Image is getting more and more of its books out on time, the orders are continuing to fall.

In the UK, retailers are still cutting their orders down, and what's most painful to them is that at the end of the week, many of them appear to still be finding too many copies on the shelves unsold.

Image is no longer a rare item. In the initial Marvel defection period, if an Image book came out it was greeted as somewhat of a treat and thus sold enormous amounts.

Now that we are guaranteed a **Youngblood** (or clone), **WildC.A.T.s** (ditto) — or any of the other title for that matter — on a monthly basis, the novelty seems to be wearing off.

The recruitment of hot new artist Stephen Platt seems to confirm that Extreme Studios, at least, are aware of the situation and that without big-name talent, they are unlikely to get big pay-checks.

Information in this magazine's *Comics Economics* pages supports the fact that Image is no longer the force it once seemed. It may have a high percentage of the top-selling books of 1993, but how many will it have in 1994?

It is just a shame that Image and in particular the Extreme Studios continue poaching artists from Marvel as soon as an artist shows any potential. In the last six months, Rob Liefeld has persuaded Art Thibert, Dan Panosian and Jae Lee to leave regular Marvel titles for Image.

Now, with the recruitment of Stephen Platt, Aaron Weisenfeld and Andy (**Quasar**) Smith, it seems a safe bet that some of the industry's favourite artists may well be working for some of its least favourite people!

Splitting Image?

A RUMOUR which *Movers and Shakers* reported on nearly a year ago has resurfaced again.

The rumour, that Homage studios was struggling to keep the Image imprint alive while Rob Liefeld and Todd McFarlane had plans to break away from the imprint, proved to be entirely unfounded.

Comic watchers have recently noticed that books from Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios carry a larger logo than the Image imprint on the bottom of the their books.

Homage studios characters, now under the Wildstorm Productions banner and like Extreme Studios characters, seem to be developing a continuity related purely to their own titles.

From among the April-shipping titles, all books from Wildstorm Productions will carry its emblem alongside Image's.

Jim Valentino formed Shadowline Studios and his titles seem to have little to do with other Image titles.

Meanwhile, at the Philadelphia ComicFest last October, Todd McFarlane said he hadn't planned any crossovers with other Image characters for the foreseeable future.

Todd might also be looking at **Spawn**'s sales figures in comparison to his colleagues falling figures and be wondering how long it will be before **Spawn** begins to carry the imprint. It is only McFarlane's title that has not steadily fallen away from the top of comic sales charts.

Erik Larsen is expanding his characters' universes and the news that The Maxx is to meet PITT in the only planned crossover by Sam Kieth only fuels speculation that the Image universe is beginning to fragment.

Who knows. With Image's creators, Extreme Comics — Homage Comics — or even Shadowline Comics may all become a reality in the year to come.

A warm welcome

THE Surrey-based comic shop Avatar Comics has recently started a campaign to attract more people into the shop.

Avatar's first wave of publicity included an A5 flyer designed to inform the uninformed of the many services the shop offered. These services are stated to include "A friendly service (for anyone spending more than £30)".

Does this mean that if you spend less than £30 you're verbally abused and beaten up before being thrown out on the busy high street, into the path of an oncoming bus?

Perhaps it's time for a new advertising campaign, guys.

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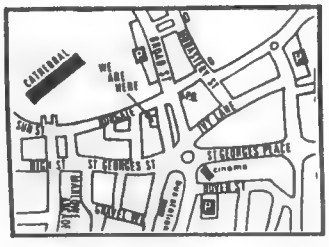

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Comics International Letters, 8 Trinity Road, London N2 8JJ

First, thanks for all your Christmas cards. Contributors, subscribers, publishers and advertisers. They made the office look seasonally festive, and, with their invariably wacky themes, were far more interesting than your average Tesco 24-pack.

Second, apologies for our late kick-off this year. Revised schedules, skip month, no good news, New Year hangovers, chose any or none of the above. But be warned, we make up for it next month with a 176 page issue. ... Dez Skinn/Editor

Stuart Jones,
St George's, Manchester

I WAS most dismayed to read about the abolition of the zero rating from your reviews section, as this could often be the source of much entertainment. How else can such reviewers as FPB (Fabio Paulo Barbieri) — the undisputed king, or PCP (Peter C Phillips) — a close second, register their petulant disgust at having to review a comic which they vehemently believed to be completely without merit?

A (1) rating just isn't the same. It's the sort of consolatory mark they feel obliged to give "For the nice cover" or "It was well stapled" or some such feature. Whilst I agree that a minus rating is perhaps going a little far, I do feel that the zero rating should be reinstated for the benefit of us all!

Andrew Harvey,
Leytonstone, London

At last readers have new subjects to debate outside of Image Comics and snuff movies in your *Comment* section, thanks to the latest crop of contributors, Arthur Ranson, Peter David and Dave Sim. I'm looking forward to the inevitable rebuttals to each in your next issue.

But at risk of overcrowding the debating corner, there is a serious issue I'd like to add to the current subject matter, in hope of a reply in print from somebody in the know. It's a problem which ultimately affects everybody; the lead time imposed on retailers for ordering new comics.

Let's say that the print orders are needed from the publisher two or even three weeks ahead, on the off-chance printers forgot to buy any paper, or to schedule in the next issue of a monthly title. Unlikely, but we'll give them the benefit of the doubt. So why do retailers have to order almost three *months* ahead? Do distributors really need almost two months to add up their orders?

Forcing shops into playing the futures market on almost 600 titles every month means they will almost all under order. They can't risk dead stock, so they won't speculate.

This results in shops often getting orders wrong and having to suffer two more (already ordered) months of each new title (or new story arc/new writer/new artist/new theme) before they can get it right with issue four, by which time things have usually totally changed again.

To avoid this potential loss-maker, shops often order only the proven sellers, ignoring any experimental lines, new publishers or hype (look at the lack of early Valiant and Ultraverse books around). So, the distributor, the publisher and the printer (all of whom make money out of volume) lose out because they rigidly adhere to an advance ordering system as outdated as the Comics Code Authority.

If a shop under orders, that's less turnover/profit for everybody, all the way up through the distributor, the printer and the publisher. And it means a greater likelihood of the readers (remember them?) having to pay premium prices for good titles as back issues because they were under ordered in the first place.

This means that everything from the Death of Superman to Jeff Smith's **Bone** suffers through a huge lead-time long overdue for revising.

Can anybody explain this riddle to me? If it takes less than a week to print and ship a comic, why are shops forced into ordering almost three months ahead of *scheduled* shipping date (and often four or five months ahead of actual shipping date)?

It's great to see the distributors getting heavy on publishers, imposing an earlier cut off on late shipping books. If a publisher can't ship within 60 days of promised date, he shouldn't have solicited it in the first place. But let's consider the other side, the 60-90 day lead time which is imposed on poor old retailers.

Were we to be cynical, we'd argue that the 90-day lead time allows publishers to take a no-risk option on new titles. There have been many examples of books solicited which received poor order responses and were suddenly cancelled.

Were they ever drawn, or was the publisher testing the market with a few names and a match-box size visual?

Then there's the favourite where a book is resolicited, but at a higher price with the same content. Perhaps the assumption is that if a $3.95 title doesn't break even on 20,000 orders, a $4.95 cover price will make it worth printing. (Dez)

Andy Oliver,
38 Sycamore Ave, Upminster

IT IS with great amusement and sad resignation that I read your lead story on Marvel's supposed new direction. (**Comics International** #38) Just reading through your front page story I see that rather than trying anything really innovative (a story-led comic from Marvel would make something of a pleasant change) we're about to get more of the same torrid nonsense. Just pick out the key words here; *crazed killing machine, brutal, vengeance, grittier, more violent, more bestial, darker* and of course the obligatory *dying, death* and *die*.

For Marvel to really "reinvent itself", it needs a complete overhaul of its creative staff; many of whom are responsible for producing some of the stalest, uninspired and truly tedious comics in years, Given the rather incestuous set-up between editors and writers at Marvel, I fail to see this happening anytime soon.

My remedy? It's time Marvel started tempting back writers of real ability and stopped rewarding their current purveyors of dross with further work. I'd much rather read a Marvel story by a Stern, Ostrander, Byrne or Jurgens than one by the appalling likes of Kavanagh, Marz, Mackie and the now rather tired Michelinie.

Gavin Palmer,
21 Markham Ave, Weymouth

PHEW! Thank God for Alex Thomas and his comment (**Comics International** #37), about the categorising of comic fans and their traits. Until I read his enlightening words, I too was a dumb, despicable and deviant comics' enthusiast, but now that he has shown me the error of my ways, I shall be giving them up forthwith and entering the cold, brutal reality of the real world.

Henceforth, I shall follow the one true path of cynical righteousness that Alex has illumined. All hail!

Reubs Willmot,
19 Melbourne Road, Ipswich

OKAY, so Neil Gaiman models himself on Lou Reed, (*Ranson Notes*, **Comics International** #38) but that doesn't stop him from being one of the most talented writers working in comics at the moment, which probably shows what a sorry state the industry is in more than anything.

So comics can't be intelligent and experimental, Mr Ranson? That takes me back to my comments on narrow mindedness (*Comment*, **Comics International** #37).

Gaiman's **Miracleman** is utter sh*t like Ranson says, but **The Sandman** is hardly a product of the 30 second concentration span generation, that's far more applicable to Image Comics.

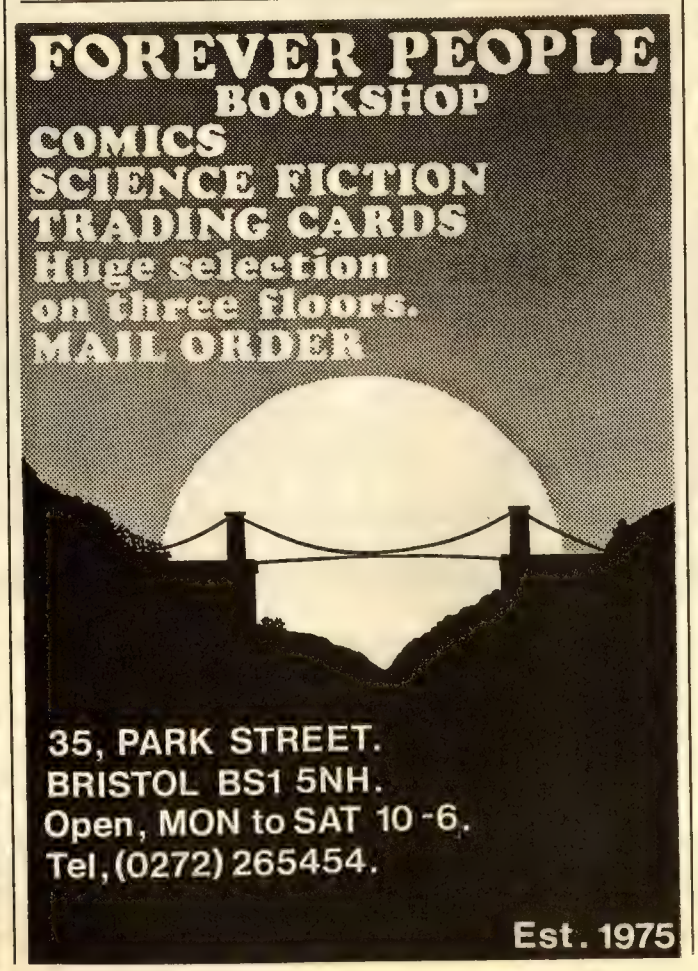
There's an alarming snobbish attitude towards b&w comics being some how far inferior to colour comics. If someone could tell me why a comic suddenly becomes better by colouring it in, I'd love to know. Does the same principal apply to films? I think not.

There are some really sad Luddite attitudes towards painted comics, where by people believe we should stick to the old fashioned flat colours made up of hideous large dots.

Comic readers seem to swallow any marketing hype/gimmick dreamed up by companies like Marvel; buying comics just because the Punisher guest stars in it, no matter how tenuous the reason, or small the part. There's buying numerous copies of the same comic just because the covers are different. Buying most modern comics for some kind of collectability is sheer folly and certainly no excuse.

Excuse my ignorance but is the heading to James Waite's letter *Hey Reubs... don't make it bad...* (*Comment*, **Comics International** #38) a quote from a song or something?

*Thanks for making us feel old. It's paraphrasing one of the most famous Beatles songs **Hey Jude** with the opening lyric, "Hey Jude, don't make it bad..." (Dez)*



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Aliens, Anne Rice, **Batman**, Clive Barker, **Concrete**, **Death's Head**, **DHP**, DC, **Excalibur**, **Ghost Rider**, **Grendel**, Image (coupons), Innovation, **Marvel Comics Presents**, **Mask**, **John Byrne's Next Men**, **Predator**, **Punisher**, **Samurai**, **Spawn**, **Spider-Man**, **Star Wars: Dark Empire**, **Superman**, **Terminator**, **TMNT**, **Wolverine**, **X-Men**, **Wizard**, *2099*, graphic novels, annuals, trading cards and more. **Sword of Azrael** 1-4 £18; **Dark Horse Presents** 24 £18; **Spawn** 4 £5.50; **2000AD** issues 600-605, 607-625, 629, 633-649, 651-661, 663, 665, 671, 673, 675-681, 684-687, 692, 696, 698- 831; 201 issues for £99 including p&p. Large SAE to Alex Cotton, Willow Green, The Warren, Ashstead, Surrey, KT21 2SG.

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Wanted: any **Captain Britian** from **Mighty World of Marvel**, **Marvel Superheroes**, and **Captain Britain** second series. Also **Marvel Masterwork**, volume 17: **Daredevil** 1-10 for a reasonable price. Please send details to: A Ramsay, 3 Sherwood Drive, Bebington, Mersyside L63 8LA.

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Wanted: **Batman: Captured by the Engines** paperback by Joe R (**Jonah Hex**) Lansdale. Also, other Lansdale novels: **Magic Wagon**, **Nightrunners**, **Dead in the West**, **Drive-in 2**. Reasonable prices paid. Phone Neil on 051 920 0509 after 5pm.

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Battleground 4. Articles about Meng and Ecker, Shade, Dr Fate, Manga and more. Hellstorm writer Warren Ellis on submitting to comics companies. Loads of letters and reviews. Bags of cynicism. Fed up with the hype? Read **Battleground**. £1.75 cheque/PO payable to Andy Brewer, 58 Kingsley Crt, Aylesbury Cl, Salford M5 4EZ.

Infinitum Comics announcement: A new year, a new name, a new publisher, a new title, a new stable of talent! We've changed our name to Invictus Comics, mainly 'cos it sounds better, and we're bringing some great material your way soon! Coming in May is out preview title, **AD Invictus**, showcasing all our new stories! Advertised for sale nearer the time, this features strips from Paul Lister, Azim Mohamed, Barry Renshaw, Mike Doddington and Steve Bentley. For more info, send a SAE to: Invictus Comics, Belmont Cottage, 22 Anfield Road, Liverpool, L4 0TD.

Due to unforseen problems, **Mutant Media** 4 is unlikely to be released before March 1994. If anyone who has already paid for it wants their money back, I'll be more than happy to refund you, but... issue 4 promises some real exclusives, including strips never before seen by the majority of X-Men fans in either this country or the USA.

Marshall Reece (Rhys?) — please contact Darkside Comics ASAP by letter or phone message, clearly leaving your phone number and/or address (please spell). Thanks for your messages — we are trying to contact you but need this information.

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eVENTS

An at-a-glance guide, this listing gives the dates and locations of all forthcoming events advertised this issue. A free service for advertisers, the bracketed number after each entry denotes the page this issue where the advertisement with full details appears.

FEBRUARY

5/2 **NOTTINGHAM:** Comic Mart, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling St .... (p 18)
6/2 **LONDON:** Comic Mart, T.U.C. Congress Centre, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1 ..... (p 68)
12/2 **BRIGHTON:** Comics, Fantasy & Pulp Literature Mart, Brighton Centre (p 75)
12/2 **STOKE-ON-TRENT:** Comic Mart, YMCA, Harding Road, Hanley ..... (p 18)
13/2 **LONDON:** Card Mart, Camden Centre, Bidborough St, London WC1 . (p 33)
19/2 **LIVERPOOL:** Comic Mart, Bluecoat Concert Hall, Liverpool ..... (p 50)
19/2 **SHEFFIELD:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Main Hall, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield ..... (p 18)
20/2 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace: Special Edition, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1 ..... (p 19)
26/2 **CARDIFF:** Comic Mart, The Central Hotel, St Mary's St ..... (p 30)
26/2 **LEEDS:** Comic Mart, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p 18)
27/2 **LEICESTER:** Comic Mart, YMCA, Granby Street ..... (p 18)
27/2 **WATFORD:** Comic & Sci-Fi Fair, Watford Leisure Centre, Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford ..... (p 7)

MARCH

5/3 **NEWCASTLE:** Comic Mart, Blackfriars Hall, New Bridge Street ..... (p 18)
6/3 **LONDON:** Comic & Sci-Fi Fair, Central Club, 16 Great Russell St, WC1 (p 7)
12/3 **BIRMINGHAM:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Carrs Lane Church Centre .. (p 18)
13/3 **LIVERPOOL:** Comic Mart, Gladstone (Forte Crest) Hotel, Lord Nelson Street Liverpool ..... (p 18)
19/3 **GLASGOW:** 2-day Comic Art Convention 1994 begins, Clyde Hotel, Clyde St, Glasgow 2 ..... (p 17)
19/3 **MANCHESTER:** Comic Mart, Parkers Hotel, Corporation Street. ..... (p 18)
20/3 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough St .. (p 54)
26/3 **NOTTINGHAM:** Comic Mart, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gelding St .... (p 18)
27/3 **WATFORD:** Movie Mart & Collectors Fair, Watford Leisure Centre, Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford ..... (p 20)

APRIL

2/4 **LIVERPOOL:** Comic Mart, Bluecoat Concert Hall, Liverpool ..... (p 50)
3/4 **LONDON:** Card Mart, Camden Centre, Bidborough St, London WC1 . (p 33)
9/4 **BIRMINGHAM:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Carrs Lane Church Centre .. (p 18)
16/4 **LEEDS:** Comic Mart, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p 18)
17/4 **LONDON:** Comic Mart, T.U.C. Congress Centre, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1 ..... (p 68)
23/4 **MANCHESTER:** Comic & Card Mart Special, Sachas Hotel, Tibb Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p 18)
30/4 **SHEFFIELD:** Comic Mart & Film Fair, Main Hall, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield ..... (p 18)

MAY

1/5 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace: Special Edition, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1 ..... (p 19)
22/5 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough St .. (p 54)
29/5 **BRIGHTON:** Comics, Fantasy & Pulp Literature Mart, Brighton Centre (p 75)

JUNE

18/6 **LONDON:** Comic, Film & Sci-Fi Mart, Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London SW1 ..... (p 16)
19/6 **LONDON:** Card Mart, Camden Centre, Bidborough St, London WC1 . (p 33)

JULY

24/7 **LONDON:** Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough St . (p 54)

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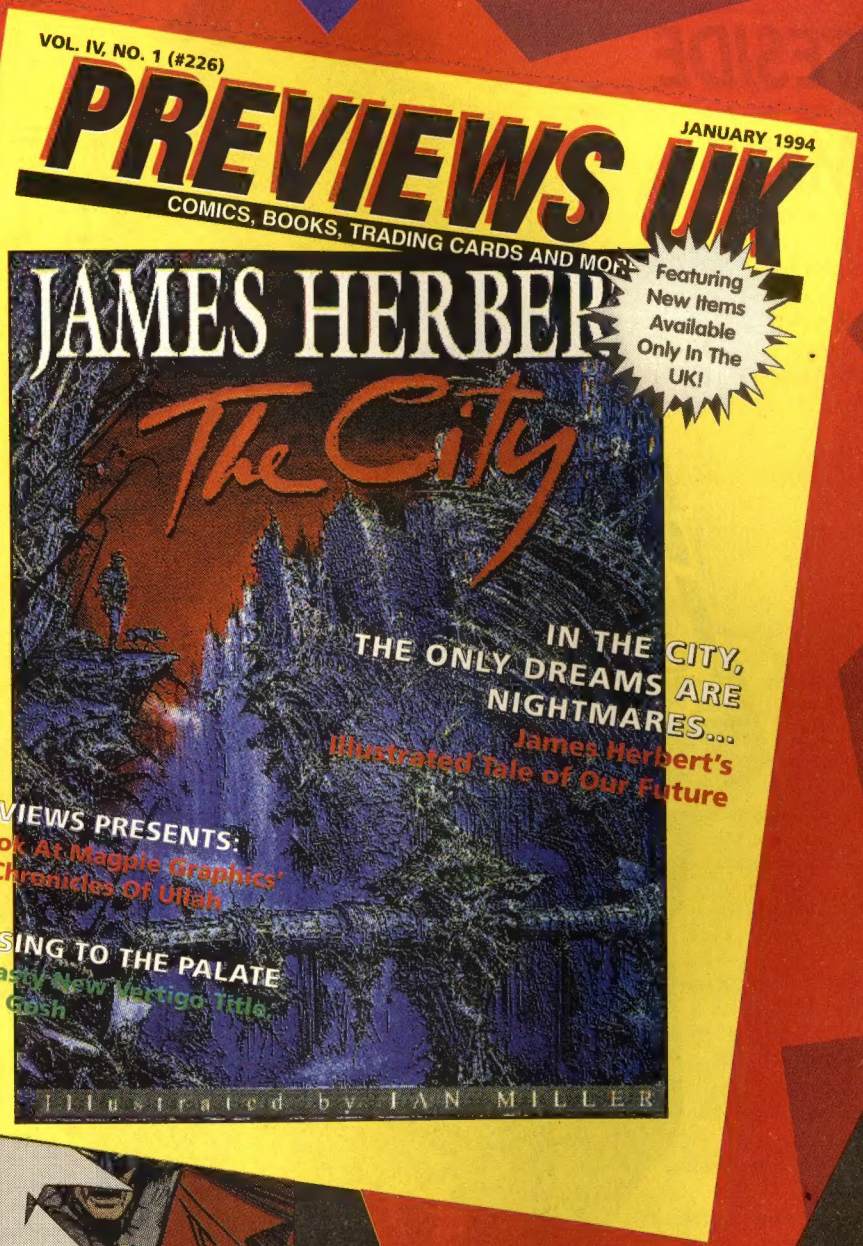
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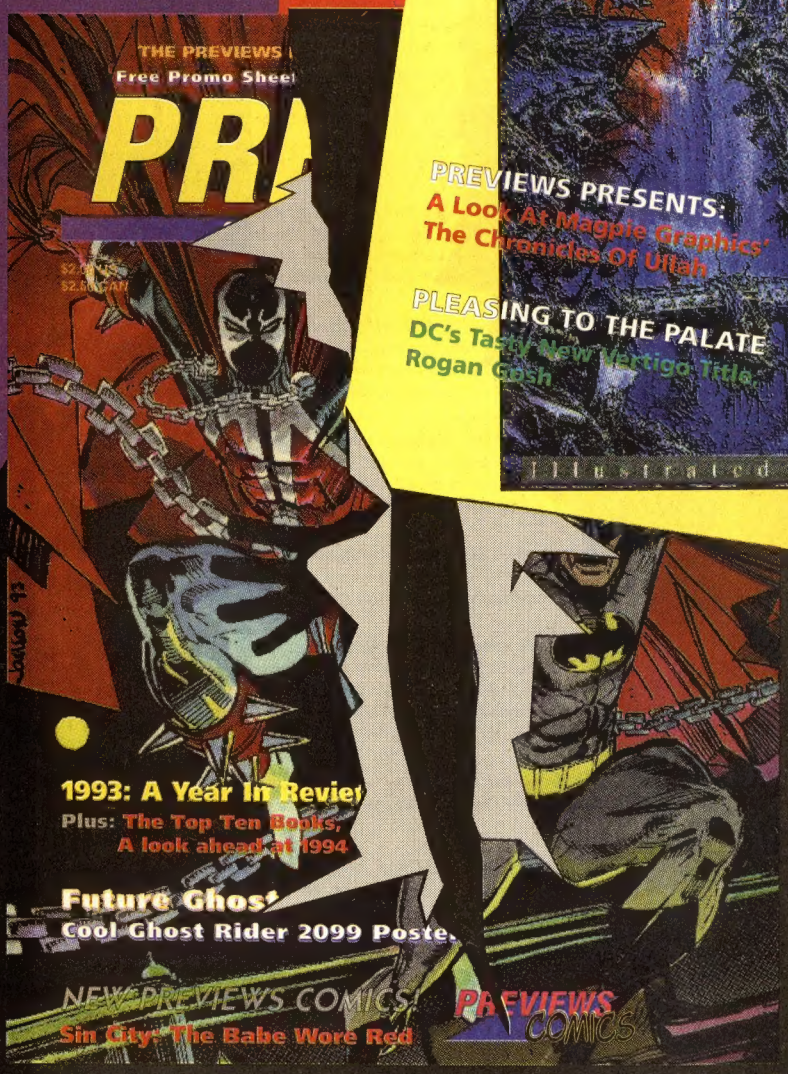

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